The Catholic
Theological Union
Chicago, Ill.

EX LIBRIS

252.1
H526

SOCIETATIS
VERBI DIVINI
Techny, Ill.

252.1
H526

SHORT SERMONS

Nihil Obstat.

D. CUTHBERTUS ALMOND, O.S.B.

Imprimatur.

D. AIDANUS GASQUET,

Abbas Præses Congr. Angl., O.S.B.

SHORT SERMONS

WITHDRAWN

BY THE

REV. F. P. HICKEY, O.S.B.

The Catholic
Theological Union
LIBRARY
Chicago, Ill.

WITH INTRODUCTION

BY THE

RIGHT REV. J. C. HEDLEY, O.S.B.

BISHOP OF NEWPORT

FATHERS' LIBRARY
TECHNY, ILL.

BENZIGER BROTHERS

NEW YORK, CINCINNATI, AND CHICAGO

1906

DD | 6787

INTRODUCTION

It is a pleasant task to introduce to priests and to the Catholic public generally a volume of thoughtful, sound, and useful short sermons.

To be "short" is surely an essential note of every profitable sermon. A "long" sermon—if we except certain special and well-understood occasions—as a rule tends to deaden spiritual receptiveness, and to confuse intelligent appreciation; and as to its moral effect, it seldom leaves the hearer any better than he was before. At the same time, when we lay it down that a sermon must be short, we do not mean that it should be too short. The Word of God must be treated with care and study, and presented according to those rules which are prescribed by "art" of the genuine sort — that is to say, nature, but nature observed, enlightened, and disciplined. The hearer, also, has to be reverentially considered. What is abrupt, crude, confused, or scrappy, or what in other ways shows signs of haste or immaturity, is always ineffective, and generally resented. Every sermon, therefore, has to have a beginning, a middle, and an end. First, you have to get on terms with your audience. It is well known to every student of human nature that the average man requires just as much to have his "attention" adjusted to focus when someone begins to address

him, as to have his eye adapted to take in distance or to make out what is strange. As regards the matter of a sermon, it is no less certain that, however valuable and impressive every item of Christian doctrine may be in itself, you cannot make any single detail of Christianity produce the desired reaction in the breast of him who sits before a pulpit without some special procedure. This consists in a certain continuousness of exposition, in which, by the stimulating help of a number of carefully chosen details, you make him follow with some distinctness a single and fairly simple main idea. Neither is it possible, in any profitable sermon, to do without some kind of ending; because a sermon is no use unless it is adapted to insure "edification," or that moral effect which draws men nearer to God. Therefore, either directly or indirectly, the moral should be pointed, because, unless the preacher points it, the ordinary hearer by no means realizes it as distinctly as he might.

Thus, every sermon needs a reasonable amount of time to constitute itself, and to take that form and substance without which it is at best a rhapsody, and generally a mere string of utterances that neutralize one another, and that never get home to the hearer. What the ideal length of a sermon should be can hardly be laid down, as so many circumstances have to be duly allowed for. But I certainly think that a really complete and worked-out sermon can be accomplished in a quarter of an hour or twenty minutes; and that, as a rule, sermons which go beyond that time, unless they are much above the average in idea and expression, become more ineffective by every additional minute or two.

But pastors are called upon for sermons that are not only relatively, but, as we may say, absolutely short. It is a most praiseworthy practice to give a "five minutes'" instruction at the early Mass on a Sunday, at the week-day evening service, and at other times. Our people, in my opinion, profit very much by these brief talks—even more than they do from the more formal sermons of the Sunday. This is, in great measure, because the sermons are not only too long in themselves, but because (in the morning) the sermon is combined with a long *Missa Cantata*, and follows an interminable string of notices, and sometimes scoldings on the part of the priest. In order to help priests who adopt this excellent practice of short sermons, many volumes have already been published. It is not easy to produce an effective "five minutes'" sermon. First of all, it should not be more than five or six minutes, because the service to which these sermons, belong cannot be conveniently lengthened, nor is it right that the priest, with his hard Sunday's work, should exert himself more than is needed. Then, it is not easy to make a "beginning," develop a "middle," and come to a suitable "end" in such a short time. Yet it is on this that the effectiveness of the short sermon depends. Nothing is easier than to stand forward and make a series of commonplace remarks; to go on repeating one's self, or talking *de omnibus rebus*, until the five minutes lengthen into ten or fifteen.

To me it appears that the sermons in this volume are fair specimens of what would really catch the attention and do good. Each sermon has unity, and the leading idea is steadily worked out. They contain a

good deal of instruction of a clear and definite kind—and many preachers fail to give sufficient instruction. The language, though homely, is terse and pointed, avoiding weak and hackneyed phrases. There is no lack of warmth and piety. The writer, it is understood, has undertaken his task—which seems by no means ungrateful to him—at the wish of his religious Superior. He has aimed at providing a series of useful discourses for occasions when, perhaps, an overworked or delicate priest would, if not helped in this way, be obliged to leave his people without the Word of God at all. They will read well, and will strike the hearer as having a character of their own, if the reader takes a little pains with them. Neither will they be difficult to reproduce without book, as they are very orderly, with well-defined, though necessarily brief, divisions. And the absence of stilted language, whilst good sterling English is not neglected, will attract those who hold, with Cardinal Bellarmine, that a preacher ought "ita cum multis ac si seorsim cum singulis agere"—that a sermon is not very different from a serious and sustained personal talk.

JOHN CUTHBERT HEDLEY, O.S.B.

FEAST OF ST. LUKE,
October 18, 1906.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT: MORTAL SIN	1
SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT: JUDGMENT	5
THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT: CHRIST LAWGIVER AND KING	9
FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT: CHRIST THE REDEEMER	13
CHRISTMAS, OR SUNDAY AFTER: THE FESTIVAL	17
SUNDAY AFTER THE NEW YEAR: A GOOD BEGINNING	21
THE FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY: AIDS TOWARDS A GOOD LIFE: THE PRESENCE OF GOD IN THE SOUL	25
THE SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY: AIDS TO A GOOD LIFE: THE HOLY NAME	29
THE THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY: AIDS TO A GOOD LIFE: CONFESSION AND COMMUNION	33
THE FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY: OBSTACLES TO A GOOD LIFE: TRIALS	37
THE FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY: OBSTACLES TO A GOOD LIFE: THE ENEMY	41
THE SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY: RESULTS OF A GOOD LIFE	45
SEPTUAGESIMA: WORK	49
SEXAGESIMA: EXAMPLE OF ST. PAUL, THE WORKER	53
QUINQUAGESIMA: PREPARATION FOR LENT	57
FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT: NOW	61
SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT: CONTRITION	65
THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT: CONFESSION	69
FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT: THE EASTER COMMUNION	73
PASSION SUNDAY: GRACE NEGLECTED IS WITHDRAWN	77
PALM SUNDAY OR GOOD FRIDAY: THE MERCY OF GOD, AND HOW IT WAS RECEIVED	81

PAGE

EASTER: THE VICTORY OF CHRIST - - - 86
LOW SUNDAY: THE TEACHING OF CHRIST AFTER THE RESURRECTION - - - - - 91
SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER: THE TEACHING OF CHRIST AFTER THE RESURRECTION (*continued*) - - 95
THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER: THE SHORTNESS OF LIFE - 99
FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER: OUR DESTINY - 103
FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER: DUTY OF PRAYER - 107
SUNDAY WITHIN THE OCTAVE OF THE ASCENSION: CHARITY 111
PENTECOST: THE HOLY GHOST AND THE BIRTH OF THE CHURCH - - - - - - 116
TRINITY SUNDAY: THE POWER OF THE CROSS - - 121
SUNDAY WITHIN THE OCTAVE OF CORPUS CHRISTI: THE LOVE OF OUR LORD IN THE BLESSED SACRAMENT - 125
THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST: HOLY MASS - 129
FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST: OBEDIENCE TO THE WORD OF GOD - - - - - - 134
FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST: THE MARKS OF THE CHURCH: THE CHURCH IS ONE - - - 138
SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST: THE HOLINESS OF THE CHURCH - - - - - - 142
SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST: THE CHURCH CATHOLIC AND APOSTOLIC - - - - - 147
EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST: THE ENEMIES OF THE CHURCH: THE WORLD - - - - 151
NINTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST: THE ENEMIES OF THE CHURCH: THE FLESH - - - - 156
TENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST: THE ENEMIES OF THE CHURCH: THE DEVIL - - - - 160
ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST: THE ENEMIES OF THE CHURCH: THEIR ALLY, THE DRINK EVIL - 165
TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST: A TYPE OF CHRIST - 170
THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST: A TYPE OF OURSELVES - - - - - - 174

PAGE

FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST: THE FIRST, SECOND, AND THIRD COMMANDMENTS - - 178
FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST: THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT - - - - - - 182
SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST: THE REST OF THE COMMANDMENTS - - - - - 187
SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST: RESPONSIBILITY - - - - - - 191
EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST: CHOSEN, BUT NOT WORTHY - - - - - 195
NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST: INDIFFERENCE 199
TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST: REMEMBRANCE OF DEATH - - - - - - 203
TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST: FORGIVE AND BE FORGIVEN - - - - - 207
TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST: THE CARE OF OUR SOULS - - - - - 211
TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST: GOOD DISPOSITIONS - - - - - - 215
TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST: PERSEVERANCE - - - - - - 219
THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION - - - - 223
PATRONAGE OF ST. JOSEPH - - - - 227
THE ANNUNCIATION - - - - - 231
THE SACRED HEART - - - - - 235
SS. PETER AND PAUL - - - - - 239
THE PRECIOUS BLOOD - - - - - 243
THE ASSUMPTION - - - - - 247
ST. MICHAEL AND THE ANGELS - - - - 251
ROSARY SUNDAY - - - - - 256
ALL SAINTS - - - - - - 261
ALL SOULS - - - - - - 265

First Sunday of Advent

THE EVIL OF MORTAL SIN

"Tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that worketh evil."—Rom. ii. 9.

1. What we fear we try to avoid.
2. But we are not always wise in fearing what we should.
3. The one evil to be feared is mortal sin. Why? Because threatening, near, partially hidden, irremediable except by God's mercy.
4. Happily it is not unavoidable; fear and prayer keep us from it.

Fear, my dear brethren, is the pain arising from the apprehension of evil, threatening and destructive. And what we fear we try to avoid. For what precautions we take against anything unpleasant or painful! How we dread poverty, diseases, and the approach of death!

But we are not always wise in fearing just what we should. Not seeing and appreciating thoroughly what really is evil, we fall into the mistake of fearing things that are harmless, and not fearing those that are dangerous. Poverty and suffering are most men's idea of evil. But there is a mistake somewhere.

Our Blessed Lord teaches us, "Blessed are the poor," and sufferings He chose for Himself and His Blessed Mother. But there was one thing that He did fear, one thing that wrung from Him a bloody sweat, that

nailed Him to the cross, that broke His adorable, loving Heart, and that was mortal sin.

That is the one evil that we must learn to fear and try to avoid. We have often shut our eyes to the deadliness of sin. Our nature leads us to commit it; it is so hard to be ever resisting, so easy to fall, that we are disinclined to acknowledge that sin is really the only evil to be feared.

With the light of God's grace, let us look into mortal sin. Let us see what it is, what it entails, and how it enthrals us. We need not fear all evils. But those that are near, threatening, destructive, secret, and hidden—those are the ones from which we draw back appalled.

Test it thus, and see how mortal sin is to be dreaded. It is near. Your own bad desires and passions, the wickedness of the world around you, make you feel that you are hemmed in by sin and the danger of it. Near? Why, in your thoughts, on your lips, in your heart, a mortal sin may be lurking.

Not only near, but threatening. Falling into sin is not chance work. You have an enemy, clever, cunning, who is always trying to make you fall into sin, or having fallen, to keep you in it. Such is the devil's implacable hatred that it is war to the death.

And the danger is the greater because it is partially hidden and concealed. Partially hidden even from the devout and watchful, wholly concealed from the careless, the thoughtless, and the dissipated. What is hidden? Its malice against God. Temptation is so pleasant and plausible, but do not trust to that. See how God hates sin, how He punishes it, and how sin punished our Lord when He took upon Himself the iniquities of us all; then you will realize with horror the malice of mortal sin.

What is hidden? Its power of enthralling the poor soul. Habits of sin are formed, the soul is darkened, the will loses its strength; of themselves sinners are helpless.

What is hidden? The miseries that mortal sin entails. The devil is not loyal to those who follow him and give themselves to him. Promises at first and enticements; and when they are securely in his power, remorse, despair, the fear of hell haunting them. Even in this life, as far as we can help ourselves, these miseries cannot be remedied. We cannot even ask for mercy from the offended God, unless the good God gives us the grace. There are many so contented in their sins, so blinded, so besotted, that they never even ask God for pardon. Pray "that none of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." (Heb. iii. 13.) Unless the infinite goodness of God intervenes, such people are already victims devoted to the fire of hell, "reserved under darkness in everlasting chains unto the judgment of the great day." (Jude i. 6).

But if death finds us in mortal sin, the evil is altogether irremediable: we are beyond redemption then.

But let us bless Almighty God that this evil of mortal sin, which is so near, so destructive, so malicious, is not altogether unavoidable. If there were no gleam of light on this dark picture, our fear would become despair; for we cannot fear unless hope tells us that we may avoid the evil.

Yes, it is to holy fear and prayer that we must look to be delivered from the hands of our enemy. Fear the evil of sin. As the Scripture says, "Flee from it; pass not by it; go aside, and forsake it." (Prov. iv. 15.) If you make light of the evil, if you trust to your own goodness or cleverness, you are lost. The wise

man warns us: "My son, hast thou sinned? Do so no more; but for thy former sins also pray that they may be forgiven thee. Flee from sins as from the face of a serpent; for if thou comest near them, they will take hold of thee. The teeth thereof are the teeth of a lion, killing the souls of men." (Ecclus. xxi. 1, 3.)

Keep from the evil and pray. Pray that you may have a good will to cling to God, to obey God, to try to please God. All depends on that good will. The devil is powerless unless your will consents. Without consent there is no sin, no evil, but only temptation. Fear and prayer will keep your will safe, adhering to God.

We see, then, what mortal sin is. The one evil that we need fear and avoid. Who can hesitate to resolve to do this, when he remembers its malice and its terrors? It is a great work—the work of our lifetime; a work in which we are sustained and helped by the grace of God; a work for which God is faithful to reward us.

Second Sunday of Advent

JUDGMENT

"O that they would be wise and would understand, and would provide for their last end."—DEUT. xxxii. 29.

1. Judgment: Danger of condemnation; that all has to be made ready in life, and this life so uncertain.
2. What would our judgment be now? Remembering, Jesus Christ the Judge then: no excuses received; every grace to be answered for; one sin enough to ruin us.
3. If not condemned, are we good enough for heaven?
4. The thought of judgment a practical one; what we must do.

MY dear brethren, we shall all and each be brought to judgment. Our end, our aim, should be to escape condemnation, to obtain a favourable sentence. "Oh that they would be wise and would understand, and would provide for their last end." That is just what is wanting: men will not think of and forecast the end. Though they have been forewarned, upon most men the judgment will come with the suddenness of a flash of lightning. Think of the judgment, fear it, and the thought will make you be up and doing, and manfully undertake what is necessary for your salvation.

Most people, and ourselves amongst them perhaps, flatter themselves that, somehow or other, matters will come right—that they will escape condemnation.

Now, what reasons have we for hoping so? For woe to us if our hopes are unreal and presumptuous.

The danger of condemnation lies in this. Everything has to be settled and put right before death. No mending matters after! And this death is so uncertain. Can anyone keep prepared and expectant for years? Very few: only those who are wise and understand, and provide, as the text tells us, for their last end.

Death is indeed uncertain, but there is a rule about it. "As you live, so shall you die." Think, then, now, if we had died suddenly this last week, what would have been our sentence.

Remembering, as we think of it, that Jesus Christ is the Judge then. In one moment the meek Saviour, the loving Jesus, becomes the just Judge. Love, mercy, forgiveness, give place to justice.

Remembering that no excuses are received; that no good intentions of what we were going to do are of any avail. We have had time, wasted time; now time is no more. We are face to face with eternity.

Remembering that every grace has to be answered for. What countless blessings, chances, offers, have we had from God! We thought nothing or so little of them, and now to account for every one of them! Appalling thought! Yes; those graces were purchased for us by the blood of Jesus Christ, and at the judgment He is looking for the fruits of His Passion and Death.

Remembering, finally, that one sin is sufficient to bring down condemnation upon our poor souls—one sin, wilful, deadly, and unrepented of. Our consciences will be examined then; no sin, of thought, word, deed, or omission, can escape the all-wise and all-seeing Judge.

What would, then, our sentence have been, my dear brethren, if we had died this last week? Few, let us hope, feel that it would have been eternal condemnation. And yet, how can the best of us say that we have deserved to hear "Come, ye blessed"? What have we done to deserve that? Remember our lukewarmness, selfishness, failings, and negligences innumerable. We dread to think that we should have incurred condemnation; we scarce dare hope that we should have deserved the kingdom of heaven. How have we gained the kingdom prepared for us? What have we done to merit it?

God has been looking forward from all eternity to the glad hour when He will reward us all for our love and service. And can we have loved and served Him so as to deserve this reward? We, who so seldom raise up our eyes and long for heaven; we, who are so satisfied and content with this earth, who have forgotten that we are only pilgrims here, and have made it our home; we, who perhaps cannot put our hand on a single thing and say, we gave up that for heaven! Alas! on the contrary, we must confess that we have not given up sinful habits and attachments when we should, we have shirked our duties, we have gone on in tepidity and in sin, perhaps so long that we have lost all fear and dread of sin. We, whose faith is so lifeless that we cannot think of the God to Whom we pray, whose hopes know no fervour and no longing. My dear brethren, what have we done to be rewarded? Is it not presumption to expect the joys of heaven for the little that we have ever done for God?

Surely we can all be humble and truthful enough to say that we are unprofitable servants; that we,

like the five foolish virgins, have slumbered and slept, instead of making ready for the bridegroom.

What, then, must we do? Sit down and repine? Complain that it is too late, and cannot be helped? No; we must make a fresh beginning. God is always well pleased if He sees us even beginning in earnest. We must be wise and understand, and prepare for our last end. Judgment is coming; our aim is to escape condemnation, to be found worthy of the kingdom prepared for us.

Do not go away and say you did not know what you had to do; that the sermon was too general and not practical. One moment's thought will make the judgment bring something practical to each one's mind. Judgment will lead those to confession who feel they are living in sin. It will tell those who are self-satisfied because they go to Communion frequently that "true repentance is amendment and change of life." So to commit the same sins, month after month, without a struggle, should make you doubt your contrition. Judgment will reproach those who are living easy, tepid lives, that they are cowards, and that "the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away." (Matt. xi. 12.)

Practical, truly practical, is the remembrance of the judgment. It bids us all not to put off, to make no excuse, no delay, but to be wise and understand, and provide for our last end.

Third Sunday of Advent

CHRIST, LAWGIVER AND KING

"Keep your minds and hearts in Christ Jesus our Lord." —PHIL. iv. 7.

1. Christ the Lawgiver: Obedient Himself; obedience our security.
2. Christ the King: Fidelity and loyalty exacted; the spirit of the King should animate us; the difference.

ADVENT charged us to look first upon sin and judgment, and now to turn our eyes to Him, to Whose coming the world looked for its redemption. At His coming the old law had to pass away and the Jewish observances to give place to the service of Christ. He came, as Isaias calls Him, "our Lawgiver and our King." (Isa. xxxiii. 22.)

Turn your minds to the Lawgiver and your hearts to the loyal service of your King.

The Lawgiver—yes, for He came in obedience Himself, "to do the will of Him that sent Me" (John iv. 34)—His heavenly Father, and His object is to teach us to obey that same Divine will. His laws are the safeguards to our souls in our journey to heaven. His laws are not harsh and tyrannical; they are not framed to crush us, and make our life a misery. From of old "thou shalt," as the commandments began, was the rule and condition of man's being, and his

happiness and blessedness was in obeying. Woe to us when merely "I will" becomes our rule, and we disregard God's word, "Thou shalt."

Yet our Lawgiver, Jesus Christ, though He has to demand obedience, though He tells us often that all perfection is doing the will of God, endeavours to word His laws very differently from "Thou shalt." He puts before us the reward of obeying, and not the threat for disobedience. "And opening His mouth, He taught them, saying, Blessed are the poor in spirit . . . blessed are the meek . . . the merciful . . . the clean of heart . . . the peacemakers. Blessed are they who suffer persecution for justice sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." (Matt. v. 2-10.)

Obedience in following out these blessed words gives security, peace, and repose to our souls. For by obeying, by submission, we make our will and God's will one; and His blessed will must always be accomplished. Keep your minds in Christ Jesus, our Lawgiver, for He has said, "Learn of Me, for I am meek and humble of heart." (Matt. xi. 29.)

And our hearts we must keep in loyal allegiance to our King. Our Saviour came on earth to become the King of men. Great is the honour conferred upon us in being asked to serve our King, and great the fidelity exacted in that service. He is not as other Kings. If it is the height of men's ambition to serve earthly Kings, to be honoured and rewarded by them, what enthusiasm, what noble pride we should take in dedicating ourselves to the service of the King of Glory, God the Son, become Man for our sakes! His kingdom will never end; the honours He confers for faithful service are eternal.

And the fidelity exacted is such that only a coward

could shrink from. He never gives an order without at the same time giving grace and power to fulfil it. He never demands anything from us that He has not previously accomplished Himself. And His eye is always on us, watching to smile approval and encouragement. And all we do for Him is certain of its reward. "I have fought a good fight," says St. Paul; "I have kept the faith. . . . And there is laid up for me a crown of justice which the Lord, the just Judge, will render to me." (2 Tim. iv. 7, 8.)

Alas! we are not earnest in the King's service, because we do not know Him, and watch Him, and keep near Him as we should. The Gospel says to-day, "There hath stood one in the midst of you, Whom you know not." (John i. 26.) Whom we know not? How can that be? We are not unbelievers; we are the children of the Church. We do know Him; faith points Him out. Yes, my dear brethren, we can recognise Him; but are we acquainted with Him? Are His words the guide of our actions? Is His goodwill the aim of our life? His Spirit the impulse of our hearts? His honour and glory the end of our existence?

Look, examine; and how unlike our King we shall find ourselves to be. His life tallied with His words; and what a contrast are ours! He said, "Blessed are the poor . . . the meek," and He can appeal to His actions to show that He was. "Blessed are the merciful" is another word of His, and His life proved that He was. The miracles that He wrought proving His mercy crowd our memory. And the clean of heart He blesses likewise. Those who are all for God, doing all with a pure intention and earnest zeal, "they shall see God." And selfishness and love of

ease and negligence, alas ! separate us from the clean of heart.

" Blessed are they who suffer persecution," says the King again. And we dare not meet His eye when He utters those words, for we have played the coward's part many a time, not taking the side of God boldly, whatever it might cost us. No, we have been afraid of a taunt, a sneer ; we have temporized ; we have truckled to human respect, and tried foolishly to be friends with both sides. Persecution ! how few of us have nerved our hearts to suffer that, even for the kingdom of heaven !

You must, then, try to learn of our Blessed Lord. Begin in earnest. Recall Him as the Lawgiver, and practise obedience to His every wish ; recall Him as the King, thank Him for the honour of being His soldiers, and nerve yourselves to fidelity in His service. " Keep your minds and hearts in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Fourth Sunday of Advent

CHRIST THE REDEEMER

"He will save us."—Isa. xxxiii. 22.

1. Christmas recalls the Saviour.
2. Why did Christ save us? Out of love and mercy.
3. How did He save us? Became one of us, left Himself with us.
4. The Holy Eucharist continues His work of saving: proves His love, awakens ours.

Advent is drawing to a close, my dear brethren, and we come to the end of the text, "The Lord is our Judge, the Lord is our Lawgiver, the Lord is our King: He will save us."

Christmas-time naturally leads us to think of Him Who came to "save His people from their sins." (Matt. i. 21.) The remembrance of His coming should make us glad and grateful. The cheery thoughts and holy joys of Christmas are founded on the belief that "He will save us," or, as the prophet says again, "God Himself will come and save us." (Isa. xxxv. 4.)

What was the reason, the motive, of this infinite goodness of God? That is the first and uppermost thought when we hear "He will save us." It was a happy and a blessed thing for us, but what motive led God to do it? Simply, completely through love. God did not need us; He was no better with us; it was all for our sakes. Pure love brought the Son of

God on earth, a Man for our sakes, to save us. With gratitude behold Him and adore Him, God the Son made Man for our redemption.

And as He was God and Man, He had the full power to save us. As God, He could not have suffered ; as Man alone, His redemption would not have satisfied the infinite justice and holiness of God. But in Jesus Christ, true God and true Man, is vested all power and authority. "The Lord is our Judge, the Lord is our Lawgiver, the Lord is our King : He will save us." He is the giver of all grace, the object of our worship and adoration.

By what means and in what manner did our Lord save us ? He did what love prompted Him to do. And what was that ? "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us." (John i. 14.) He became Man to be with us, to be like us, to be one of us. The mystery of Christmas tells us of this. We go over to Bethlehem to see what has come to pass. Faith takes us by the hand, and entering in, we adore.

And, being born, He dwelt on earth for thirty-three years, Emmanuel, God with us. And to win our sympathy, and to show us sympathy, He made Himself like unto us. He could feel cold and hunger and the hardships of poverty ; He could feel unkindness and neglect. He could show friendship, and love, and loyalty ; He could be faithful to the end. He made Himself one of us—sinners were His friends ; He loved little children ; the sick and the distressed made His kindliness betray His almighty power, for He could not help but heal them.

When reading the Gospel narrative it is but natural for us to yearn to have lived in those days, and to have seen Him, and to have been near Him, and to have

listened to His words. My dear brethren, Christ merely a figure in history is not enough. His life would have become a fable by this, His name and fame a myth. His power and influence would have waned, and how few faithful ones would have been found in the doubting, disbelieving mass of mankind. No, a historical Christ is not enough. The love that prompted Him to become Man, that same love urged Him not to come and go, but to remain ever with us. And He truly is, as He promised to be—"I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world." (Matt. xxviii. 20.)

So, with the eyes of faith, we can see Him now—see His miracles, acts of mercy to our own souls. For He is with us yet in the Blessed Sacrament of the altar. The same motive that urged Him to become Man impelled Him to institute the Holy Eucharist. The same power which could save us—the almighty power of God—could change the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ. The same means, that which love dictated. The simplest, easiest way of being in the midst of us. Under the appearance of bread—bread which can always be had; bread, whose properties to feed and nourish all understand—He put Himself in the reach of all. This was His very object, that all might come to Him, that He might save them.

And does the Blessed Eucharist continue the work that He did on earth? Yes, the Blessed Sacrament can and will save us. First, it can save us, for it is God. The Blessed Sacrament is the Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity, of Jesus Christ.

And, secondly, it does save us. For, offered in the Mass, the Body and Blood of Christ is the sacrifice for sin, Calvary renewed on the altar. The sight of

Jesus on our altars makes the Almighty prolong His patience and be merciful to us, His poor children. "Look not upon us, but on the face of Thy Christ."

And, lastly, the Blessed Sacrament proves the love of Christ and awakens ours. Proves His love, for even He could do no more! What more could even the Almighty do than give us Himself? The thought of this awakens our love, and makes us realize that the highest work of our love is to believe and adore Christ in the Blessed Sacrament. Love for Jesus on the altar is the spring and source of all the holiness in men's lives—the strength of martyrs, the success of missionaries, the purity and patience of virgins, the perseverance of all those who have been saved.

If we are cold and unloving, it is all our own fault, for He, Who came to save the world, is here to save us still. What better opportunity could we have of renewing our faith and fervour than this holy Christmas-time, the anniversary of His coming to save us? We have not to go far to find Him. Bethlehem is here. The same motive that brought Him to Bethlehem brings Him here upon our altar—His love. Let this proof of His love awaken ours in return.

Christmas

"This day is born to you a Saviour, Who is Christ the Lord." —Luke ii. 11.

1. Bethlehem.
2. The picture that sight, that faith beheld.
3. Is Christmas a mere memory?
4. Our altar is Bethlehem, the house of bread.
5. We must come as the shepherds, and led by the angels.

The Gospel has carried away our hearts to Bethlehem. In spirit we are in that country where the shepherds were keeping the night watch over their flocks, when, behold, the brightness of God shone round about them, and the angel of the Lord stood by them. "Behold, I bring you tidings of great joy, that shall be to all the people, for this day is born to you a Saviour, Who is Christ the Lord."

That is why our hearts are at Bethlehem; we have come "to see the word which has come to pass," to adore that God Who became Man, that we, poor sinners, might become the sons of God. My dear brethren, our first thoughts are of lowly adoration and thanksgiving to Him, "Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity." (Titus ii. 14.) But where is the Saviour? Let us be thankful for the word of the Gospel, "This shall be a sign unto you," for without it how could we recognise our God? "You shall find the Infant wrapped in swaddling

clothes, and laid in a manger," and yet, beholding merely that, we must believe and adore, "He is the Saviour, Christ the Lord"! Oh, faith and sight, how different the picture they present to us!

We see the picture that sight presents to us. The stable of Bethlehem, a rude cave on the hillside, adjoining the inn, and used for cattle. And there we find two poor people who had been seeking in vain for shelter, but there was no room for them at the inn, though the poor young mother sorely needed a shelter that winter's night. "But she brought forth her firstborn Son and laid Him in a manger."

Such is the picture that sight presents; but what does faith depict? Faith bids us see in that poor Infant the blessed hope, the glory of the great God, our Saviour Jesus Christ. It tells us, "He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not." (John i. 10.) And the reason why He came, "that we might be made the sons of God." And He came poor and an infant to win our hearts from us, to show He came to the poor and simple, to show that He did not want fear, but love. And the God Who came to redeem His own world was an outcast in that world!

And faith tells us yet more. It tells us that His coming was successful in spite of the world. The world knew Him not, and rejected Him. And yet what name is revered and adored the wide world over, nineteen hundred years after that Christmas night, but the blessed name of Jesus? Then, He only had a stable for a home, and now all the countless churches in the world are His home, and costly altars, ablaze with lights, beautiful as man can make them, instead of the manger where poor Mary laid Him. And

millions of hearts are worshipping Him this Christmas, in spirit bending over the Infant, their aspirations, their love, their yearning centred on Him, Jesus alone influencing their lives and destinies.

And is this Christmas night a mere memory—mere poetry of the past? Many may say so, but with us Catholics it is not. Christmas to us is a blessed reality. We believe that the same Lord becomes present on our altar during Mass, Who was found by the shepherds in the manger with His Virgin Mother by His side. Let us rejoice that we can come, as the shepherds did, and adore our new-born Saviour. How can we do it worthily? We must imitate the shepherds. They were poor, simple, obedient men. They did not argue and contradict in their ignorance; but they believed the announcement of the angels, and hastened to adore. And the angel found them at their duty, keeping the night watch. We, too, are keeping the night-watch over our souls, looking for the blessed hope and coming of our Saviour.

And we must come in the company of the angels. May they lead us to Him to worship their God and ours! Let us sing with them, and give glory to God on high.

We owe our Lord a special acknowledgment of His Divinity on Christmas Day. All through life the hidden Godhead showed Itself in some way. On earth He spoke as one having power; at His baptism the heavens opened, His heavenly Father spoke; His miracles proclaimed Him more than man; at His death the Jews struck their breasts, saying, "Indeed this was the Son of God" (Matt. xxvii. 54); but in the manger, the weakness, the defencelessness of infancy was relieved by no miraculous distinction.

The angels bade the shepherds go, but we read of no angels at the stable. The Infant in swaddling clothes! If faith were not at hand to remind us who this Child of Mary is, could we realize the unspeakable abasement of the eternal and infinite Son of God?

Christmas speaks to our hearts. It speaks to us, indeed, of sin, or why should we need a Saviour? But it speaks to us, too, of God's pity and forgiveness, "of the plenteous redemption there is with Him." He would have no one excluded from His mercy. He came an Infant—a poor little Infant—appealing for our sympathy and love. Let us bid Him welcome to our hearts, and give our lives to Him. He is easily content; He only asks our love. "For not by the works of justice that we have done, but according to His mercy, He hath saved us." (Titus iii. 5.)

Sunday after the New Year

A GOOD BEGINNING

"We should live soberly, and justly, and godly in this world."—TITUS ii. 12.

1. Soberly, as regards ourselves, our minds, appetites, lusts.
2. Justly, as regards our neighbours, their name, goods.
3. Godly, as regards the Almighty; know, love, and serve Him.
4. Motive of all, "looking for the blessed hope."

How clearly the words of the text, my dear brethren, ring out at the beginning of a New Year! St. Paul strikes the true note, and in these words teaches us how to start and how to persevere through the year, if we would please God. "We should live soberly, and justly, and godly in this world."

So it is not your priest, but St. Paul, who preaches to you to-day. And you see how his words of wisdom divide themselves naturally, and embrace all the duties of a good life—duties to ourselves, our neighbour, and Almighty God.

We should live soberly—that is, we have to keep ourselves under due restraint, our appetites, desires, minds, and tongues. The common meaning of soberly is carefulness against drink—not only against intemperance, drunkenness, but against even the indulgence in or liking of drink, lest "we put an enemy

into our mouths to steal away our brains." So, then, first we are bound to be sober as regards our appetites.

Then, to be sober-minded—on the guard against dissipation, giddy thoughtlessness, as if we had no soul to save, nothing more serious to do, than enjoy life and have a good time. For following quickly on this would come sensuality, and our passions, unrestrained, would lead us to the worst excesses. Oh! the sins of youth, the impure thoughts, words, and deeds, because we had no restraint upon our desires and passions!

Our tongue, too, has to be sober and restrained. What an evil is an intemperate tongue! "For the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity.... An unquiet evil, full of deadly poison." (Jas. iii. 6, 8.) It is humbling indeed to find that St. James says that man can tame all kinds of beasts and serpents, "but the tongue no man can tame." (*Ibid.*, 7, 8.)

"We should live soberly and justly," continues St. Paul; and this word embraces all the duties towards our neighbours. We feel as if this would apply to very few churchgoers; are we not all honest and respectable people?

Are we living justly if we needlessly get into debt? or being in debt, do not try and plan and pinch ourselves to repay it? Are we living justly if we drive hard bargains and overreach our neighbour?

And there is more than his money that we can steal from our neighbour. There is his or her good name. And how is that stolen but by whispered calumny and detraction, by unkind gossip, by repeating ill-natured remarks? What miseries and enmities and crimes have been caused by malicious tongues! Who can look back and say, "I have always lived justly in

this respect"? "If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man." (Jas. iii. 2.) Live justly towards our neighbours—and who such neighbours, bound so closely in love and responsibility to each other, as parents and children? In justice, then, see that your children are brought up good Catholics, knowing and practising their holy religion. In justice, keep a good and blameless home for them. In justice, give them good example, so that they cannot help but honour and obey you.

How much can St. Paul say in three words—soberly, justly, and godly! This old English word explains itself. It bids us be pious, reverent, and obedient to God. There are pagans who have been sober and just; a Catholic must needs be godly as well. He has "to know, love, and serve God." To know Him, he must have been brought up in a Catholic school, prepared for the Sacraments and well grounded in his faith. And even in after-life, no one can despise sermons, instructions, and good books. For the more we know God, the more we shall love Him; and the less we know Him, the less we shall love Him. And yet our Blessed Lord has said: "Thou shalt love the Lord Thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind." (Matt. xxii. 37.) How thoroughly, then, should we know Him, if we have to love Him thus. This loving God is not a mere matter of sentiment, of devotion: it is "the greatest and the first commandment."

But how can one tell whether we do love God? We can test our love. Our Lord has said: "He that hath My commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me." (John xiv. 21.) Keeping the commandments is serving God. So, unless we serve Him

by obedience, serve Him by worship, serve Him by submission to His holy will, we do not love Him.

That word serve is one that most people do not like. Service is doing something that we are told, when we are told, and as we are told. And how we dislike that! But God is the Master, and does not reward us for doing what we like, but what He orders. And our holy religion in God's Name orders us to serve God, by prayer, attending Mass, receiving the Sacraments, keeping the commandments. This is serving God.

It is not, then, as easy as we perhaps thought "to live soberly, justly, and godly." Not one of us could persevere this year of himself. But St. Paul does not leave us with the bare command. What are his next words—the grand motive that should urge us on? "Looking for the blessed hope and coming of the glory of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." (Titus ii. 13.) That is the why and the wherefore that should make us live soberly, and justly, and godly; that should start us in this new year.

The First Sunday after the Epiphany

AIDS TOWARDS A GOOD LIFE; THE PRESENCE OF GOD IN THE SOUL

"And the Lord was with him."—GEN. xxxix. 2.

1. God's presence in the soul an aid towards holiness.
2. For to sin we must forget God.
3. Example of Joseph; he remembered his God, though sold by his brethren, though a slave amongst pagans, though cast into prison, though honoured and triumphant.
4. How much easier for us to remember God's presence; Joseph's example; we know God and our Saviour; we have the means of forgiveness and beginning again.

THE remembrance of the presence of God in our soul is a help to us in our endeavours to lead a good life and a stay in temptation. And having resolved to begin a more devout life with the New Year, let us study this aid to be good—viz., the presence of God within us.

"The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God" (Ps. xiii. 1), and every time we fail in our duty and commit a sin, we have in reality said the same. The sinner forgets his God. "God is not before his eyes: his ways are filthy at all times.... For he hath said in his heart, God hath forgotten" (second division, Ps. ix. 5, 11). To keep good we must acquire just the very opposite habit of thought. Instead of persuading ourselves that there is no God, that He has forgotten,

that He does not regard us, does not trouble about us, we must school ourselves to the constant thought that the Lord is with us and His eye ever upon us. The more constant this remembrance, the more sinless and holy our lives.

There is an example of this, illustrating it and proving it, in the Book of Genesis. In one short chapter four times over is repeated the text, "And the Lord was with him." You know, my dear brethren, that it is the example of Joseph to which I refer. His envious brethren sold him to the Ishmaelite merchants, and they brought him to Egypt, and Putiphar, chief captain of the army, bought him.

Joseph was a slave in a foreign land. What condition could be more open to temptation than the soul of this Hebrew youth? How natural, when suffering from his brethren's jealousy and persecution, to have given up all belief in right and truth—to have said in his heart, "There is no God"! How natural to have abandoned his piety and to have sunk in the sensuality and godlessness of the Egyptians. This temptation would be increased by the sense of his absolute loneliness. What mattered it what he did? Had not God forgotten him? He was an outcast and a slave. There was no father's voice, no tender, watchful care, no good name to keep unsullied—all these helps had gone from him, as it seemed, for ever. How noble, then, and what an example to us all, to keep as good and careful and chaste without them! No outward help to sustain him; no, but there was something within him—the presence of God in his soul. Joseph's example is the most splendid display of the power of God's presence ennobling the soul of man. Amidst the temptations of Egypt, his faith and love carried

his heart back to the vale of Hebron; and daily he worshipped, as his father had taught him, the God of Israel.

One after another trials came on, and Joseph's soul, buoyant with the presence of God, surmounted wave after wave of trials and temptations. Sold as a slave, he found favour most wonderfully in the sight of his master, "and the Lord blessed the house of the Egyptian for Joseph's sake." (Gen. xxxix. 4.) Prosperity was dawning on him, when he was tempted, and by resisting, he was ruined. And when he answered the temptress, the same thought of God's presence emboldened him to face ruin rather than sin. "How can I do this wicked thing, and sin against my God?" (verse 9). "His master, giving too much credit to his wife's words, was very angry, and cast Joseph into prison." (Verses 19, 20.) How hard to bear a dungeon without a murmur, as the reward of chastity, fidelity, and truth! How he must have cherished the remembrance of his God in his heart, or else the temptation to think that he was forgotten and abandoned would have overwhelmed him!

Just in that darkest hour the Scripture says: "But the Lord was with Joseph, and having mercy upon him, gave him favour in the sight of the chief keeper of the prison, who delivered into his hand all the prisoners, and whatsoever was done under him. Neither did he himself know anything, having committed all things to him; for the Lord was with him, and made all that he did to prosper." (Verses 22, 23.)

How difficult it must have been for Joseph to have had such faith in God in all his trials! And yet he kept it and preserved it. We find him even in his triumph and when honoured by Pharao the same; for the

King's greatest praise was, "Can we find such another man that is full of the spirit of God?" (Gen. xli. 38).

The remembrance of God's presence should be the same help and strength to us. And how much easier for us to cultivate it in our souls than for Joseph.

First, we have his wonderful example to instruct and encourage us; and we have not to suffer the hard struggles of that poor, persecuted young brother.

God has been revealed to us far more plainly than He was to Jacob and to Joseph. Since then, that God has become Man, and revealed His love and mercy to us, winning from holy souls a loyalty and devotedness far greater, we should think, than Joseph ever dreamed of. If Christmas has not made us know that the Lord is with us, if the star has not led us, as the Magi, to find Him, acknowledge Him, and worship Him, my dear brethren, let us be humble enough to be afraid that the Lord is not with us. How much more easy to realize that Jesus is with us than that Jehovah, the God of Israel, was mindful of His servant Joseph!

If we do forget the presence of God in our soul, if we drive it out by sin, we can return and repent, and be taken once again into His favour. We can renew our allegiance and start off once again, armed with the memory of the good God; and whatever temptation comes, let us cry out, "How can I do this wicked thing and sin against my God?"

How Heaven must look down proud of one, who cherishes this grand thought of God's presence within him, and whose life is an endeavour to keep itself unsullied! Where is the room for sin and evil, for selfishness and passion, when the soul is filled with God's presence? May the Lord be ever with us, and make all that we do to prosper.

The Second Sunday after Epiphany

AIDS TO A GOOD LIFE: THE HOLY NAME

"I will protect him, because he hath known My Name."—Ps. xc. 14.

1. A Name of power and sweetness.
2. The Name reveals Him who bears it.
3. It is the Name in which we pray, in which we preach, in which we hope for mercy, of Him Who gives the Sacraments their power, with which upon our lips we hope to die.

A BLESSED legacy our Lord has left us, my dear brethren, in His most sweet and mighty Name—Jesus the Saviour. It is a Name of power, for it is a sacramental, the very invoking of which brings help to our soul by the ordinance of Christ Himself.* It is a Name of sweetness, for the Name recalls Himself, the humble, tender-hearted Saviour.

To see its power and the veneration in which it was held look back to the olden days of faith. From the day on which St. Peter said "In the Name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, arise and walk" (Acts iii. 6), the Church regarded it as a means of holiness and a protection from the enemy. "There is no other name under heaven given to men whereby we must be

* "Sacramentalia . . . quibus ex divinâ institutione—ut S.S. Nomini Jesu et Signo Crucis—vis aliqua salutifera annexa est." "Theol. Moral.," Konings, vol. ii., para. 1244.

saved." (Acts iv. 12.) The devil hears it and trembles, and is driven away; sinners are won over by it; hearts are melted that were obdurate against rebukes and threats of God's anger; saints inflamed by it, as their ecstasies and miracles prove; God Himself powerless against it, for He is pledged to listen to it.

And Whose name is it? It is the Name of One crucified on Calvary, abandoned, forsaken — ay, but not forgotten. So the miracle of its influence, power, the veneration in which it is held, its being the one supreme Name for all these centuries, proves the Divinity of Jesus Christ. Thus He stands revealed by means of His sacred Name before all the vast multitude of souls that He is intent upon saving. So well we know Him, His words, His actions, miracles, mercies, sufferings, and death, that the very invocation of His Name flashes back their memory upon our soul.

He has left us that Name as a means of holiness. By that Name we pray. It is His own ordinance that we ask in His Name. Seven times He bade us remember that. In the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth chapters of St. John's Gospel you will find the texts. They are similar to this: "Amen, amen, I say to you, if you ask the Father anything in My Name, He will give it you." (John xvi. 23.) In the Church we use that Name, the prayers in our book are full of it, but most of all is it the prayer of those who try to remember God's holy presence through the day. At work, pleasure, gossip, the breath of evil passing us by, in sorrow, in trials—oh, just the one sweet, blessed Name of Jesus is the prayer from the heart. The sacred Name is attuned to every want and feeling of our souls. If an organ can pour forth its notes so

varied, that at one time it peals out joy and thanks, and at another its plaintive wailing reminds us of sin and sorrow and death, how infinitely more perfectly does the sacred Name of Jesus strike the note of joy or sorrow, entreaty or loyal protestation, in the depths of the human soul? Sweet Name of the Saviour, may you be on our lips constantly in life, imbuing us with a pure intention, exciting us to devotion, protecting us from evil!

It is the Name again in which we preach. How can we say, "My dear brethren," except through Jesus Christ? He said, "Go tell My brethren." (Matt. xxviii. 10.) So you take the message from the priest: the good tidings of the Gospel lessons, his exhortations—yea, to his rebukes you humbly submit, for he speaks in the Name of Jesus.

It is the Name in which poor sinners hope for mercy. Where must the burden of their sins be laid but at the foot of the Cross of Jesus? "He came to save His people from their sins." (Matt. i. 21.) As long as His Name is Jesus, He cannot forget or refuse to be the Saviour.

It is the Name of Him, Who gives the Sacraments their power: they are administered in that Name. Grace is given us by that Name, for what does the prayer in the Mass say on this festival? "That Thy grace, being infused into us, under the glorious Name of Jesus, by the title of eternal predestination, we may rejoice that our names are written in heaven." (From the post-communion.)

It is the Name with which we hope to breathe out our souls to Him Who bore it. But, oh, my brethren, how much does that depend upon ourselves! If we seldom think of it now, show no reverence to it, have

no love for it ; or if, alas ! we use it carelessly, irreverently ; if we have been afraid to check those who scoff at it and curse by it, how can we expect that blessed favour at our death ? But if it has been our constant delight and endeavour to have it always in our heart, always on our lips, then we may humbly hope that our piety will be rewarded, and the good habit and practice blessed to the very end. And this is what the Church wishes. To gain the last blessing at the hour of death, the invocation of the Holy Name Jesus is prescribed as a necessary condition. Invoked, if the dying person is conscious ; if it cannot be spoken, it is enough if he can hear, recognise, or in his mind implore that blessed Name, which another invokes aloud on his behalf.

How happy we shall be at that last hour if we can say, "Thy Name and Thy remembrance are the desire of my soul!" (Isa. xxvi. 8.) May the last word we murmur, the last name we hear, be "Jesus." At that sound the devil will recoil from us, banished by that Name of power, and the angels come forth to meet us. Our Blessed Lord, hearing that cry of mercy, will be ready to forgive the past, and will say, "I will protect him, because he hath known My Name."

Third Sunday after the Epiphany

AIDS TO A GOOD BEGINNING: CONFESSION AND COMMUNION

"I will, be thou made clean."—MATT. viii. 3.

1. This Gospel gives aids to a good beginning.
2. The leper's cure our condemnation. We know our Saviour better; we have a worse disease; we can be cured more easily.
3. "Lord, I am not worthy." The answer from Christ. These words so often used by us.
4. These two miracles are renewed time after time for us.

THIS Gospel, my dear brethren, with its double miracle, is of interest to every one of us. Our Blessed Lord had just finished His first sermon, and these miracles were His first deeds after it. And each year, when the great festivals are over, when Christmas, the New Year, the Epiphany, the Festival of the Most Holy Name of Jesus, are passed, this is the first Gospel chosen to be read. And why? Because the Gospel contains an important lesson that we must all learn, and records miracles, the like of which are renewed over and over again for each of our souls.

What is the leper? The poor penitent coming to be cleansed. What is "Go, show thyself to the priest" but "Go to confession"?

That leper's cure is our condemnation; for, first, we know our Blessed Saviour better than he did. Our

Lord had only preached His first sermon, and the poor leper, standing afar off, beyond the crowd, had caught those blessed words of pity and of love. And then, when the crowd broke up, and our Lord was coming down from the mountain, the leper summoned up courage, and came and cast himself at His feet, and cried: "Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean." (Matt. viii. 2.) He had only heard our Blessed Lord once, and he had faith like this!

And we have known our Saviour all our lives. We know His words, deeds, miracles, the Church He founded, the Sacraments He left us, His sufferings, and His death. And where is our faith to cry out, "Make me clean"?

Our leprosy is worse than his: ours is of the soul, entailing everlasting misery—his only of the body. And we are content, if in sin, to live on festering, rotting before the eyes of God, rather than come and fall at the Saviour's feet.

And we can get made clean easier than the leper; and our cleansing a certainty, in the Sacrament of Penance if we are contrite—his only a chance, as far as he knew: "if Thou wilt." There might have been a refusal! His was in public, before the multitude, who would look with loathing on him as he dared approach—ours secretly. Hidden in the confessional, we whisper our sins to the priest, with sorrow in our heart and a resolution to amend. And, oh! miracle of God's mercy, the priest is empowered to say, as if he were Christ, "I will, be thou made clean"!

What excuse, then, have we to live in sin? What excuse, if death overtakes us before we repent? We know that we need curing; we know where to apply for the cure; and we know, thank God! that our

Blessed Lord has the same goodwill now as He had then.

No wonder Holy Church has this Gospel read year after year, and puts it on the first Sunday free after the great festivals. We have to imitate this leper, not once or twice, but all our lives long, as often as we fall into sin. Can it be that we Catholics understand this, and yet live on, months and years, perhaps, unwilling to approach the Master and seek for mercy? Is it that we doubt the goodwill, or the power, of Christ? or are we content to risk our salvation, lose our souls for ever, rather than humbly cry out, "Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean"?

Promise our Blessed Lord never to delay to appeal to Him, never to doubt or fear that He may tire of us. The mercy of the Lord endureth for ever; His answer is always the same: "I will."

Our Blessed Lord not only cleanses us, but nourishes and strengthens us as well. When the Gospel was read, there was the echo of words we know and love so well, and a vision of our past Communions rose before us. For many a time devoutly have we struck our breast and said: "Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldst enter under my roof, but only say the word, and my soul shall be healed." And these words, which the Church has consecrated by daily use in Holy Mass, were first said by a Roman soldier. The centurion told our Lord that his servant lay at home, sick of the palsy; and the gracious answer was, "I will come and heal him." Then that outburst of humility and faith from the centurion: "Lord, I am not worthy . . . but only say the word." If our faith was strong as his, we should be daily communicants, as were the early Christians. Present in the taber-

nacle now is that same Jesus Who said, even without being asked, "I will come." Here present we have the same dear Saviour Who, in these two miraculous cures, taught us that the same would be done to us, time after time, in Confession and Holy Communion.

Let us treasure up the lesson of this Gospel. How important it is is evident, for these were the first deeds He worked after His first sermon. Thinking of us He was: thinking of the countless sinners who would imitate that leper and cry for mercy, and the humility of that soldier—"Lord, I am not worthy." There are some things which, once done, are done for good and for all, such as Baptism and Confirmation. But not so with Confession and Communion. We must seek forgiveness as often as we fall, and we need daily bread for our souls as well as for our bodies. So this leper and the centurion we have to imitate continually. It will not do, just to admire their humility and faith. The same faith and humility must be alive in our hearts as well. We need them to force ourselves to go to Confession. Easy as God has made it, Confession is still hard and unpleasant enough for most of us. Yet we cannot go on without it.

Then, again, we need faith and humility when we come to receive the Bread of Life. "Lord, I am not worthy," and the memory of our sinfulness appals us; then faith cries out, "but only say the word." And we know that word is ready on the Divine lips of love—"I will." Bless God for this faith, which brings us to Him.

Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany

OBSTACLES TO A GOOD LIFE: TRIALS

"And behold, a great tempest arose in the sea, so that the boat was covered with waves; but He was asleep."—MATT. viii. 24.

1. Trials must needs be.
2. Their use.
3. Their necessity.
4. From obstacles, faith and trust in God turn them to good.
5. The calm that follows; how we can gain it.

WE have entered on a New Year determined to start again and lead a devout life. We have gratefully seen the helps that God gives us in this endeavour—prayer through His Holy Name, and the Sacraments of Penance and the Holy Eucharist.

But the Gospel shows us to-day that it is not all fair-weather sailing for the disciples of Christ. "And behold, a great tempest arose in the sea, so that the boat was covered with waves." And so with ourselves. We can only expect troubles and trials and temptations to arise. We have had them, and we shall have them. And the more devout we try to be, the more the storms and waves will buffet us.

It is the common lot of man to have trials to bear and troubles to put up with. We should look in vain through the long list of Saints to find one who gained

heaven without them. But as the Saints have all had to bear them, should it not strike us that trials must have their uses—yea, that they are actually necessary for us ?

The use of them is that they make us turn to God. In youth and health and pleasure, it is easy to forget Almighty God ; but in sickness and pain and anxiety, when friends and money are of no avail, do we not readily turn to our Heavenly Father ? It is not a noble motive to drive us to our Father's arms, but that Father is so merciful and loving, He is glad to have His children back, whatever brings them. How many owe their salvation to grief, accident, or the persecution of false friends !

Not only are trials useful, they are actually necessary. How else should we merit heaven ? "For that which is at present momentary and light of our tribulation, worketh for us above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory." (2 Cor. iv. 17.) For if we accept them from the hand of God, and bear them lovingly and patiently, we are taking up our Master's yoke and carrying our cross after Him. And God blesses our endeavours, and makes them worthy of eternal reward. "The sufferings of this life are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come." (Rom. viii. 18.)

But, my dear brethren, here is where we fail. We do not refer our sufferings to God. They envelop us so that we only see them. We forget that God is near us. Our cry is, "Where is He ? Has He forgotten us ?" The Gospel says, "But He was asleep."

Here is where faith in Divine Providence must step in. How many a time has everything seemed to have gone wrong with us, and the more we tried, the more

we failed, till we were heart-sick and weary of well-doing ! Happy for us if, in spite of all, we bravely clung to this : " May the Holy Will of God be done." But, alas ! how many have lost heart, have flung down the cross, abandoned all effort, murmured against God, that " He was asleep," and had left them to perish in the storm !

Our Blessed Lord in the boat, my dear brethren, was only trying His disciples when He was asleep. Asleep ; but His heart was watching. He was there. Fear brought them to Him : a prayer awakened Him.

In this life we have a great need of a firm faith in God's providence and care for us. Let nothing dismay that faith. In spite of all, with heart and tongue repeat : " God's Holy Will be done." Those that are fearful and lose hold of that faith, their life is but a worry, a dread, a long complaint, and it loses the reward of all. " If I walk in the midst of death I will not fear." (Ps. xxii. 4.) Cherish that faith in your heart, and take courage from the example—one word of a prayer, and there came a great calm. " Lord, save us, we perish." And Jesus saith to them : " Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith ?" Three Gospel narratives record this one incident, and St. John relates another similar to it, to impress upon us the need of faith. " Where is your faith ?" (Luke viii. 25.)

And glorify, too, my dear brethren, the power of God. Christ rebuked the winds and the rage of the sea, and there came a great calm. This in the souls of the faithful is that peace which the world cannot take from them—" the peace of God that surpasseth all understanding." (Phil. iv. 7.)

This great calm is the characteristic of every Saint.

The martyr amidst his torments ; the anchoret in the desert ; the apostle, evangelizing the heathen ; the Pope with the cares of all the Churches—in the hearts of each, there rests that same calm, the breathing of the Holy Spirit, which makes them despise all that the world can do against them ; makes them strong against all tribulations ; makes them victorious over all.

My dear brethren, a practical suggestion in conclusion. Try as best we can, we often partially fail at least. In the storms, the waves sometimes break over us and fill our souls, and we are in danger. How can we best and most surely recall our faith and courage, and find ourselves at the Master's side ? "Lord, save us, we perish." Come and visit the Blessed Sacrament. It may be only a passing call, or a Mass, or Holy Benediction, but there you will surely find Him. So quiet, so still, so voiceless ; the world may say, "He is asleep," but we know that He is awaiting His friends and watching for their coming. Come to Him and the storm will cease. Come and tell Him all your fears and unhappiness ; ask Him for His help. In St. Mark's touching words, say to Him : "Master, doth it not concern Thee that we perish ?" (Mark iv. 38.)

And His grace will create a great calm, and we shall be soothed and strengthened, and we shall rise from our knees with so profound a faith in God's providence, that we shall boldly face, and gladly suffer all the trials and sufferings of life for His Name's sake.

Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany

OBSTACLES TO A GOOD LIFE: THE ENEMY

"An enemy hath done this."—MATT. xiii. 28.

1. Looking back, each of us have said this.
2. Our Blessed Lord, too, looking at our lives, says this, and is the more ready to forgive.
3. But as we know we have an enemy, we are bound to be on our guard: pray and keep out of danger.
4. Sin is God's enemy as well. Our share.

THE Gospel, my dear brethren, puts before us a pathetic picture of the master's best endeavours almost ruined. He had had his field cared for, good seed sown: he was looking forward to a good harvest; and how was it that it was a field of weeds, choking the corn? The master knew at once, and said, "An enemy hath done this."

So many a time each of us, and all of us, looking back into the field of the past, recalling our good resolutions, our confessions, our Holy Communions, the missions we have attended, the times without end that we have begun again to be good, are distressed and grieved at what we see. What has become of all our good endeavours? We look, and there are our few scrappy prayers, listless attention at Mass, our selfishness and uncharitableness, our sins

and our shortcomings! How is it? "An enemy hath done this."

We must not lose heart when we find the enemy's work, so craftily and cunningly done, ruining so much, for there is Someone else, Who sees it, and judges leniently of our sinful, wasted lives for that very reason. Our Blessed Lord, in His mercy, makes that excuse for our sins when, time after time, we return to Confession in the same sad state — "An enemy hath done this." He knows that we are no match for the enemy. He knows that the enemy, the devil, only tries to ruin our souls out of spite towards Himself, God the Son made Man. Therefore, is there forgiveness and plentiful mercy for the humble and contrite heart, whenever it returns to its Lord, confessing, "I have wandered and strayed away from Thee, lured by temptations, following after pleasure, and, O Lord, see my poor soul now." "An enemy hath done this."

But though it is a plea for pardon, that we have an enemy, it is no excuse for carelessness and continuance in sin. As we know that we have an enemy, we are bound to be on our guard against him. The oftener we have bemoaned the ruin he has brought upon us, the more careful, the more earnest, the more watchful, we should be against him. The tepid and careless say, "Oh, we are no match for him"; and the faint-hearted, "How often have we fallen! What use in trying more?" These are cowards' words. Can we believe for a moment that our Blessed Lord leaves us at the mercy of the enemy? No; we have two great safeguards to protect us.

First, prayer: "Our help is in the Name of the Lord." (Ps. cxxiii. 8.) The Lord has said: "He shall

cry to Me, and I will hear him; I am with him in tribulation; I will deliver him and glorify him." (Ps. xc. 15.) "The Lord is my helper and protector; in Him hath my heart confided, and I have been helped." (Ps. xxvii. 7.) He, who neglects prayer, betrays his own soul to the enemy; he, who neglects prayer, turns his back upon God's help, and despises it.

The other safeguard is to keep out of danger. The devil has been compared to a chained-up dog—watchful, savage, treacherous, but he is only dangerous within the length of his chain. If we venture within reach, do we deserve pity if we are bitten? Disobedience, independence, evil company, pleasures, bad habits, lead us on; foolishly we venture too near—there is a sudden spring; we are seized. Once more in the power of the devil through mortal sin, and the poor soul cries out again, "An enemy hath done this." No, not altogether. We knew the danger: we ventured, and we fell. Keep out of the occasions of sin; be humble enough to be guided by parents and priests; be constant in your prayers, and the enemy cannot hurt you. "For though I should walk in the midst of the shadow of death I will fear no evils, for Thou art with me." (Ps. xxii. 4.)

Many of us, alas! can turn the text in our minds once more, and have regretfully to acknowledge that we ourselves have been the enemy—have been God's enemy by our wilful sins. For once, the Almighty Father looked down from heaven upon Calvary, and He saw there, dying on the cross, His own Son, God made Man! That awful spectacle! The Redeemer nailed to the cross, crowned with thorns, His side pierced with a lance! His Father from heaven looked upon Him, and knew "An enemy hath done this."

Oh yes, our sins—our mortal sins—that was their cruel work! But when we had done it, it was in our blind folly. The enemy had deluded us. We did not realize, that our sins would strike the fatal blow at the Victim on the cross.

May the eyes of our soul be opened, may we have wisdom to see the guile and the craft of the enemy, that he may never again work our ruin. Fear him, but not with a coward's fear. Fear him, and take precautions; fear him, and watch him and keep out of reach; fear him, and pray all the more devoutly that God may aid and strengthen us.

Sixth Sunday after the Epiphany

RESULTS OF A GOOD LIFE

"The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed."—MATT. xiii. 31.

1. This parable to give encouragement.
2. Our Lord Himself the mustard seed.
3. The Church likewise. Exemplify from spread of religion in the United States. Statistics from Pastoral, Cardinal Gibbons, 1889.
4. Our present life the seed; the result seen from those gone before us.

THIS parable of the mustard seed, my dear brethren, was spoken by our Blessed Lord immediately after those of the sower and the cockle amongst the wheat. Those two parables teach us the difficulty of being good, and how few keep good. Only one-fourth of the hearers receive the Word of God; and even then, amongst the good seed, the enemy sows the cockle. Their lesson is one of discouragement; the lesson from the parable of the mustard seed, on the other hand, is one of encouragement—viz., from so small a beginning great results. "The least indeed of all seeds, but when it is grown up it is greater than all herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and dwell in the branches thereof" (*ibid.*, 32).

The truth of this parable stands every test, and it does us good to verify it. The remembrance of it has

comforted many a humiliated heart, given courage, determination, and strength to many a wayfarer journeying to heaven.

For who is typified, in the first place, by the mustard seed? Christ our Lord. His birth, His life, His apparent failure in the world, the disaster, as even His disciples thought, of His death, were the seed. Contrast them with the redemption that He brought and the victory with which He has overcome the world! What Name is known, and adored, and recognised as King of earth and heaven but that once-despised Name that was nailed to the cross, "Jesus of Nazareth"? The mustard seed grown into a tree.

And as the parable depicted Himself, so also is it true of His Spouse, the Holy Catholic Church. Born in the upper chamber in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost, nursed in sorrow and suffering, exiled, hidden in the catacombs, stamped out, as the persecutors foolishly boasted, it lived through all, and grew and gathered strength, and when the days of peace dawned, it was found to have overspread the world.

But we can realize things of the days of our fathers and of the present, better and more readily than those of the distant past. As an example, then, of the growth of the Church take that of the United States of America. We know it now as the most enterprising and most pushing Christian nation in the world. Less than one hundred and twenty years ago their first Bishop was created by Pope Pius VI. Bishop Carroll was consecrated at Lulworth Castle, in the South of England—the mustard seed of the American Church. Before he died, in 1815, four more bishoprics had been added to Baltimore, and there were thirty

priests for that vast continent. Watch the miraculous growth of the Holy Church. In thirty years more—that is, in 1845—there were twenty-one Bishops, and the thirty priests had become seven hundred. And in forty years after that, when Catholic America celebrated its centenary—1889—the one Bishop, of a hundred years ago, looked down from heaven upon the land, and beheld thirteen Archbishops, seventy-one Bishops, and eight thousand priests!

And who had chiefly peopled God's Church in the United States? The poor Irish emigrant and his children. The penal laws, the famine years, had depleted Ireland, but her people had gone forth, poor little seeds of the Faith, and had already grown up the noble tree with its spreading branches, the Church of Christ upon earth.

Do not remembrances such as these fill our souls with gratitude that we are children of the same Church? Do they not give us courage to face our duties and our work as Catholics? When prayer is distasteful, our heart unruly, perseverance in a good life eluding our endeavours, we must not lose heart, but be determined to be faithful in little things. Remember, the kingdom of God is like to a grain of mustard seed. The holy men and women, who have gone before us, who built up the Church of God, were only poor sinners like ourselves. They had passions, weaknesses, imperfections, jealousies, heart-burnings like ourselves; but they cherished the faith of God, and persevered in lowly service of prayer, of obedience to the laws of the Church, of respect and reverence for all that they had been taught to love and hold dear. And the result? Everlasting joy and glory with the angels of God in heaven.

It is so easy to forget, in everyday life, to raise up our eyes and remember that we are meant for heaven. Look at the result, the issue of a good life, instead of bemoaning the burden we have to carry, the length of the journey, and the weariness of well-doing. Discouragement and repining take the heart out of any man's work. This parable of the mustard seed is one emphatically meant by our Blessed Lord to encourage us, to make us prize the gift of faith that He has bestowed on us, and to warm our hearts with the desire of imitating those, who have gone before us.

The faith within us can transform our daily life. Offering all that we do each day to the honour of God, we are not working then long hours for a poor pittance. No ; the work of our labour and our faith is for God, and God is faithful to reward us.

And in the constant endeavour of a holy, though hidden life, is it not a consolation to think of those who have gone before us ? Our surroundings may be all out of keeping with our hearts' intentions and desires. Neighbours, with no religion, could not understand us if they tried : they see nothing very different in our lives from their own ; but God does. We are living for Him, aiming to please Him, longing to be faithful to Him. Our hearts are not here ; they are with those, who have gone before us, who persevered to the end, and who are now happy for ever, with the Saints of God, as the blessed result of a good life.

Septuagesima

WORK

"Why stand you here all the day idle?"—MATT. xx. 6.

1. We are called to work, as the parable shows.
2. We must work, and the work of God's service is prayer.
3. If we work, we are secure of the reward.
4. How apathetic in spiritual life, how keen in things of this world.
5. Lent is the summons once again.

THE parable of the Gospel, my dear brethren, can easily be understood, and conveys a lesson that we cannot afford to miss. We are called to work—we must work; and if we do work, thank God, we are sure of a reward. This is, in brief, the lesson.

For the Master of the vineyard is none other than our Heavenly Father; the vineyard the service of God. The various hours denote the different stages in our fleeting life. And who are the labourers? None other than ourselves, dear brethren, variously typified by the sixth, ninth, and eleventh hour, according as we have worked for God all life long or only a part of it.

We are called to work. No one can complain that he has not had the chance to work out his salvation. There need be no unemployed in the spiritual life. There is work for all, and God calls us and bids us

enter His service. Of our own neglect we can miss the call of God. The Master went out at different hours, and still found men not employed. They had not been seeking work when He had gone out previously, or they would have been engaged. So, perhaps, hunger and want had brought them to seek work. Others, again, had idled all the day long, and only entered on their task one hour before sunset.

It is not a pleasant thing for anyone to look back and see how many times he has disregarded the voice of God calling him to His service. How happy those who responded in the first fervour of their youth, and who have never looked back or played the sluggard in their Master's service! How happy; but how few of this kind! Most of us can recall making excuses, putting God off, promising to begin some other time. But, my dear brethren, listen to Him this time. We know not what hour it may be. For some it may be the last reproach they may hear, "Why stand you here all the day idle?"

We must work. "Labour and toil . . . all the days of thy life. . . . In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread." (Gen. iii. 16, 19.) This is God's sentence on fallen man, and holds good in our spiritual as well as our earthly life.

And what is the work of our soul in the service of God? The work is prayer. It is a work, a labour, because it is supernatural. We have to raise up our minds and hearts to do it. That implies an effort. Not that we can do it unassisted; no, but the grace and power of God will never be wanting to us. But we ourselves have to will and make the effort.

And prayer is a labour, because it has to be continuous. "Pray without ceasing." We cannot pray

once and for all and be finished with it. It is the spiritual breath and food of our souls. "Give us this day our daily bread."

It is a work, because the world, the flesh, and the devil raise up obstacles against it. They try to obstruct the regularity, the routine of prayer. Persevere in prayer, and you are the faithful labourer in the vineyard.

Prayer is the work that accomplishes the salvation of our souls. All-important work that it is, how time is begrudged to it, how interest in it wanting! Prayer is speaking to God, interceding for grace and giving thanks for blessings received; and yet often our attention and love are wandering to other things during that sacred time. To pray well is, indeed, a labour, but one that cannot be shirked, if we would save our souls. We must persevere in regular and daily prayer, for we never know when evening may come and the Lord say: "Call the labourers and pay them their hire." Alas for our poor souls, if we are not in the vineyard labouring when the wages are paid! If we are working till the sunset we are sure of our reward.

And notice the reward. There is no comparison between the labour and the reward. The reward is so great, because "I am good," says the Lord. Life eternal, the infinite happiness of heaven, the wages for the work of this short life in the service of God. Short life! How little of the short life do we give to God! Whatever little may be left of it, let it now at least be all for God.

Contrast our worldly wisdom with the sluggish folly of our spiritual life. We understand quite well the connection between work and wages. How keen we

are to get the utmost for our money, if we are the master, and to get the best money for our labour, if we are the workmen! Six days a week we are smart and business-like for a few shillings or a pound or two; but when the Sunday comes, and we are called by the Almighty to work for Him, and the wages offered are eternal life, we, the same people, have not the sense to care, nor the thrift to secure the bargain. To put it plainly, a week's wages in our hand now is much more thought of than the joys of heaven promised for the future. If men are so apathetic about their souls, what can possibly arouse them?

The warning that Lent is approaching is given us to-day—Lent, the time for work, extra prayer, and repentance. The Master is calling us: "Come ye also into My vineyard." No loitering now, no delay. Enter in, and with good and willing hearts let us work whilst there is light.

"Why stand you here all the day idle?" Yes; this may be the last Lent for some, who hear these words to-day. The Master may never come again bidding them to His service. The next time they are bidden, it will be a summons to the judgment.

Sexagesima

EXAMPLE OF ST. PAUL, THE WORKER

"I have laboured more abundantly than all they; yet not I, but the grace of God with me."—1 Cor. xv. 10.

1. Example of the worker, St. Paul.
2. Why did he work so hard? Because he valued the grace of God, because of the years he had wasted.
3. The same applies to us: the grace of God as bountiful to us; and past years wasted.
4. We must work to get to heaven, and the work is at our hand. Ask St. Paul's assistance.

Last Sunday the Gospel impressed upon us the necessity of working to get to heaven—the labourers called to the vineyard—and to-day in the Epistle, we have the example of the great worker St. Paul set before us—the worker who cried out the moment of his conversion, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" (Acts ix. 6); the worker who owns, "I have laboured more abundantly than all they."

We have to be saved as well as St. Paul; may recalling his example stir our hearts up to be willing and anxious to work for God! Now, what was the secret of the earnestness, that carried him through such labours, journeys, perils, preachings, persecutions? Why did he work so hard?

Because he valued the grace of God—the grace which

had singled him out. Others had been passed over, but the persecutor had been chosen for an apostle! Guilty of the death of St. Stephen, breathing forth vengeance against the disciples at the very moment of his conversion, yet he was called!

Because he valued the grace of God, which made all things work to his good. The very fact, even, that he had been a Pharisee and a persecutor made his preaching the Name of Jesus all the more wonderful, and aroused the interest, the faith, the enthusiasm, of his hearers. Even that he was a Roman citizen procured him the chance of preaching Christ in the Eternal City.

Because he valued the grace of God by which heaven was secured to him. "That being justified by His grace, we may be heirs, according to the hope of life everlasting." (Titus iii. 7.)

And another reason why he laboured so unweariedly was this, because of the years he had wasted. He wanted to make up for the past. How he would regret that he had not known our Blessed Lord! Others had heard the words of Christ and seen His miracles; others, like Peter and Andrew and John, had been with Him, called, and chosen, and taught, and filled with the Spirit of the Saviour; and, meanwhile, Saul, wise in his own conceit, filled with the pride of the Pharisees, had scorned the new Teacher, Who went about doing good to all. The Pharisees had to own that the whole world was gone after Christ, yet Saul had disdained to approach and listen. Oh! those years that had been wasted!

And, worse still, the evil he had done! He had been more bitter against the disciples than anyone else. He was consenting to the death of Stephen.

"Saul made havoc of the Church, entering in from house to house, and dragging away men and women, committed them to prison," says St. Luke. (Acts viii. 3.) No wonder, then, St. Paul laboured, hurried, pressed on, filled with remorse and anxiety for the days he had not known Christ.

Let us turn from St. Paul to ourselves. He worked, because he valued the grace of God. We do not work, because we do not value that same grace. He was singled out and chosen, so have we been. There are countless better people than we are, who have not the gift of faith, who have not been called to be God's own true children.

And how God's grace has made all things work for our good—even our sufferings, poverty, sickness, death of those dear to us! All these have happened to us to check us in our evil ways, to recall us to the service of God, to win us back to Christ, Who alone can heal the stricken heart. And God's grace, poured out upon our souls by the Sacraments, makes it so easy, if we only would, to be saved.

And do not past wasted years urge us on? No; it is too unpleasant to look back, and we shut our eyes, and try not to remember our neglect, our infidelities to God. Those wasted years might now be made a powerful motive to urge us on to work. Think of them, beg God's pardon, and resolve to be up and doing. If not, they will rise up against us at the end and call for our condemnation.

To get to heaven we must work. Make up your minds to that, at once and generously. Then, how must we work? "Blessed are they who hear the word of God and keep it." (Luke xi. 28.) God's real glory is our obeying Him through love. So let each

of us seek His will and do it, and work it out day after day. Prayer is the work, and regular attendance at church is the work, and forgiving our neighbours, and keeping the commandments. Oh, the work is ready to our hand! Do it for the love of God.

If we have not the courage to act up to grace, to give our hearts to God, to please Him and work for Him, ask St. Paul to help us. He, who converted so many thousands by his preaching, can convert us by his prayers. And his example is preaching to us yet. If we need a friend to help us, on whom can we rely more surely than on St. Paul? If we are converts to the faith, we have a special claim upon him. If we wish to make up for years misspent and wasted, he will make us zealous. Remind him how he laboured, congratulate him on his reward from the faithful Lord, and humbly, earnestly ask him to win us over, and bring in another soul to God.

Quinquagesima

PREPARATION FOR LENT

"They told him that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by." —LUKE xviii. 37.

1. The Gospel picture. The blind man's prayer: "That I may see."
2. Lent is the passing by of grace.
3. Our prayer, too, that we may see God's goodness, our sins; that we may follow Him, obedient and dutiful; that we may glorify God by prayer, confession, and thanksgiving.

TOWARDS the end of the Gospel, my dear brethren, we are told of the blind man, who sat by the wayside begging. And when he heard the tramp of the feet of the multitude passing by, he asked what it meant. "They told him that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by." And immediately he cried out, saying, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me." And they rebuked him that he should hold his peace, but he cried out much more: "Son of David, have mercy on me." And what did our Blessed Lord do? The crowd had rebuked him, but our Lord, "standing, commanded him to be brought unto Him. And when he was come near, He asked him, saying, What wilt thou that I do to thee? But he said, Lord, that I may see. And Jesus said to him, Receive thy sight: thy faith hath made thee whole. And immediately he saw, and followed Him, glorifying God."

What other is Lent, which we begin this week—what other is it but "Jesus of Nazareth is passing by"? And there are many blind men sitting by the wayside—many amongst us doing nothing to get to heaven, indifferent or helpless. Maybe during Lent the good example and prayers of others—the earnest ones who keep Lent—may make them notice and remember that Jesus is passing by.

Yes; He is passing by once more. Let no one despise the opportunity. We are all blind indeed, and let our prayer be, "Lord, that we may see—see Thee and see ourselves."

Oh, blessed sight, that would make us realize God's goodness! First, in giving us a Lent, which is a special time for grace and forgiveness—a special time when our prayers have more power with God; when our hearts are more easily touched; when, fulfilling our duties, repentance leads us to a change of life. And the special devotion of Lent—devotion to the Passion and Death of our Redeemer—leads us on to more and more earnestness and love. Who can think of the sufferings of his Lord and be mean enough to shirk his duties, to cut down his prayers, to begrudge a little suffering in abstinence and fasting? Think of the Cross, and you will not refuse to be followers and soldiers of Christ.

Our prayer is to see—see God, see ourselves. What a contrast in the two pictures! God's infinite goodness and the awfulness of our sins. Their number affrights us, their ingratitude and malice appal us. And to whom can we turn in our distress, but to the very One Whom we have offended? In His goodness God makes our very sins help us to realize His mercy and love.

Our next step is to follow Him, as the blind did when his eyes were opened. To follow Him, he kept near Him, kept Him in sight. Oh, how glad he was to look upon that blessed face of Christ with the grateful eyes which He had opened! Can we not imitate him? Come to the Lenten services, attend the church with all eagerness, and you will be near the self-same Saviour. Follow Him by being obedient and doing His will; follow Him in fear, lest you lose Him; follow Him, and be not tempted this way or that, whatever may try to allure you away; follow Him, even if you are tired, footsore, and weary, as it were; follow Him, even if a cross is laid upon you, and the Master is trying whether you are worthy of Him.

"Followed Him, glorifying God." That is our final duty, glorifying God. What does that mean? We glorify God when we pray to Him. And Lent is the special season of prayer—the time when we have to pray more, and pray more earnestly. How many of our prayers are lost for want of intention and attention! So in Lent pray for something definite—true sorrow, to overcome some bad habit, for some sinful friend, for the souls in purgatory, for love of the Sacred Heart, for devotion to our Lady, for a holy death—fix on something that you long for, and pray for it. That is intention; and attention is minding your prayers, being devout, earnest. And what will help you to do that better than the remembrance of the sufferings and the Cross of Christ?

We glorify God again, and in the most touching way, when we go to Confession. When, filled with sorrow and a firm purpose of amendment, we frankly confess our sins, we glorify God by owning Him as Master, Redeemer, and Judge, and by the blessed hope within

us that there is forgiveness for all who repent and confess. We glorify God, for "there shall be joy before the angels of God upon one sinner doing penance." (Luke xv. 10.)

And glorifying God is grateful thanks, which are so often forgotten. Contrast our anxiety and long prayers before Confession, and the scant and hurried thanksgiving, when we have been forgiven. A thankless heart soon runs dry of the grace of God. We like to be thanked, so does God.

If, then, you wish to spend a holy Lent—and it may be your last one—let not Jesus pass by unheeded. Imitate the blind man, "Lord, that I may see"—see Thee, Thy goodness and mercy; see myself and my sinfulness. And immediately the sight is given, follow Him, by being faithful to your holy religion and your duties; and glorify God by prayers, by confession, and by thankfulness and gratitude.

Do this now, when the Master's summons bids you, and shortly you will follow Him further—follow Him from this world, to glorify Him for ever in the world to come, secure, never to lose sight of your loving Saviour ever more.

First Sunday of Lent

NOW

"Now is the acceptable time."—2 Cor. vi. 2.

1. Lent given for repentance.
2. The past urges us to repent.
3. The future nothing to trust to.
4. How precious the present, and Lent the best of present times.
5. For Whom have we to make ready now, this present time?

Lent is given us to repent and put our souls in order, that we may do as we are warned in that prayer and responsary to-day. "Let us amend and do better for those things in which we have sinned, through ignorance, lest suddenly prevented by the day of death, we seek time for penance and be not able to find it."

Seek time! Why, we have plenty of time. Be not too sure. Time is made of past, present, and future. We have existed, we do exist, and we must exist for ever. For most of us, the past has spoiled the present, and endangered the future.

Oh, that dreadful past! Past time, past sins, past graces and chances neglected. The time, that has gone, was given us with which to work out our salvation, in which to treasure up good deeds in heaven. If we were now judged by the past, should we not be

empty-handed indeed? Our excuse is, "Oh, the past has gone so quickly that we have not had time to do much for God." What inconsistency! We have no time for prayer, and yet we are often so dull, so miserable, that we talk of killing time. We do not know how to get through the slow, crawling hours of a monotonous life. A past lost hour can never be recalled. How, perhaps, we shall long for a little time—a few minutes more—some day, some night! When the priest has been sent for, when it is a race between him and death—oh, past time, that has been wasted, may terrify us then!

Then, the sins of the past urge us to be earnest in Lent. "Be not without fear for sin forgiven." (Ecclus. v. 5.) Let us not think of the utterly bad, but of our own careless selves. Our blessed faith removes mountains of doubt and fear, because we have the Sacrament of Penance to forgive us; and we have come to it many a time, and devoutly, too, we hope. We thank Heaven that we can seek absolution in Confession. Yet sins of the past have, perhaps, formed bad habits, have left weaknesses in our souls, for we find that we fall so easily again. Sins of the past should humble us, and instil fear into us lest we relapse.

Past graces, chances, blessings! How few acted up to manfully! how many put off, forgotten, let pass by, as if they mattered not! And oh! what an insult to the great God to delay to act up to, to refuse to accept His grace and blessings!

Oh! we will do better for the future. We have all often made that resolution. But who has a future? How long will it last? God has promised no future time, not even a day. And the eternal future—how soon it may be here!—is for reward or punishment.

The future, we can count on, is nothing. We picture the future so bright and happy : it is going to be a wonderful time. My dear brethren, the future is like the glory of a sunset, the Alpine glow upon the mountains, inspiring, almost spiritual ; but it does not last. It turns into the cold grey of evening and the darkness of night, whilst our wondering eyes are watching it. The future is gone.

Then, what is left us but the present ? And the present is just to-day—now. It lasts no length of time ; to-morrow it will be the past. The present ! Take hold of it at once. You cannot be sure of it till it comes ; you cannot overtake it when it is gone.

Thank God for the present, fleeting though its moments are. What would the lost give for one half-hour of present time to kneel and confess their sins ! What would a poor soul from Purgatory give for another Mass attended, another Holy Communion ! We have the time, the opportunity.

For " now is the acceptable time." Lent is not like ordinary present time. It is the acceptable time, when God's grace is more plentiful ; prayer goes further ; when there is forgiveness for all who seek it. God does not look for saints at the beginning of Lent. All our Blessed Lord asks for is a willing heart, ready to-day, now, to begin a good Lent—ready to give up sin. Therefore, prepare for a good confession by prayer, by sorrow, by checking yourself in sinning. Then will your Easter confession be a good one. Ready again to learn to love God, by attending church more regularly and devoutly ; by not missing a service, that you can get to, in Lent ; by listening to sermons, or reading a pious book ; by adding a little to your devotions during Lent.

And if we have not this much goodwill, readiness, let us be humble and afraid. Do not put God off, "lest you seek for time for penance and find it not."

For whom is it that we have to be willing and ready to do our best now—in this acceptable time? For Him of whom it is said, "Whilst as yet we were sinners . . . Christ died for us." (Rom. v. 8, 9.) Repeat those words, and then refuse our Blessed Saviour! The evening before He died, He left us the Blessed Sacrament — "Do this in commemoration of Me." Dare you refuse Him to go to your Easter Communion? Dare you put Him off and say, "Not now; some other year"? And He shed His precious Blood, the price of the world's redemption, and He died on the cross for our salvation. And dare we turn our back upon Him? "Some other time, not now!"

My dear brethren, good people will say, "Surely no one will ever say that—no one could be as bad as that." It is only too true.

Everyone, who misses Mass wilfully this Lent, is saying it and doing it. Everyone who will not give up a sinful habit, a wicked companion, money he has got unjustly, hatred and spite against a neighbour, is insolently saying that to God. He prefers his sins to God's redemption.

Pray God that we may never be found amongst these. "Now is the acceptable time." We are grateful for it, O Lord—for another chance. We are grateful, willing, anxious to spend a devout Lent; praying, repenting, loving Thee now in the acceptable time, "lest suddenly prevented by the day of death, we seek time for penance and be not able to find it."

Second Sunday of Lent

CONTRITION

"When as yet we were sinners, Christ died for us."—Rom. v. 8, 9.

1. Contrition the first step to repentance.
2. Why contrite? Because sin has ruined us, because sin angers God.
3. Still more because we have sinned, who have been so favoured by God.
4. Compassion urged our Lord to die for us; all He asks is gratitude.
5. Picture His sufferings, the price of forgiveness.

The season of Lent, my dear brethren, is given to us for repentance. And the first step towards repentance is to have "a humble and a contrite heart." So let us to-day, imploring God's help, try to awaken in our souls a true sorrow for sin.

Sin is an offence and outrage against God. Men can grow hardened so as to disregard and think nothing of sin. What we want is to know and value its enormity, its guilt, so that we may renounce it and be forgiven before it is too late. We should hate sin because it has so befooled us. We have been deceived, deluded by the plausibility of the temptation, as Eve was by the serpent, and we did not fully realize that it was death to our souls till it was too late. "The wages of sin is death." (Rom. vi. 23.)

We should hate sin, because, once fallen, we ourselves are helpless to save ourselves. We should hate sin because by it we have lost heaven; and what have we got in its place? There is nothing but remorse and bitterness of soul left.

And this is only regarding sin as it affects our own souls; but how much more should we detest it as an offence against God. It is disobedience, defiance, rebellion against the Almighty. By sin we have joined the ranks of God's enemies. And Isaias tells us what will happen to them. "And He shall be angry with His enemies. For behold, the Lord will come with fire to render His wrath in indignation, and His rebuke with flames of fire. . . . Their worm shall not die, and their fire shall not be quenched; and they shall be a loathsome sight to all flesh." (Isa. lxvi. 14, 15, 24.)

Thus God hates sin, and the sad part of it is that we ourselves have committed sin so frequently, so grievously—we whom God has loved and chosen and taken care of; we who have had so many graces, so many chances of beginning again to be faithful and devout. A false friend is a thousand times worse than an ignorant enemy. Every past grace and blessing adds intensity to the malice of our sins. The more we have known God the more guilty we, who have turned our back upon Him. The more enlightened once, the darker our crime now; the more favours we have received, the greater the treachery of our sins.

And yet our Blessed Lord is ready at this holy time to forgive us. "When as yet we were sinners, Christ died for us." Our Lord knew well how base and ungrateful we were, but that could not turn His love, and so, whilst we were sinners, His compassion

compelled Him to die for us. This thought grips our heart and makes us contrite more than all other motives. His death was a free gift to us; He never hesitated, never begrudged it—would be willing to die for each one of us, if necessary; but He does expect us to be grateful for it. To be forgotten and ignored is hard indeed. Listen to His complaint: "I said, Behold Me, behold Me, to a nation that did not call upon My Name. I have spread forth My hands all the day to an unbelieving people." (Isa. lxv. 1, 2.)

Because we have been forgiven so easily, so frequently, we forget what our forgiveness cost our Redeemer. Confession is so short, just to mention our sins so easy, we forget that the very remembrance of sin caused the agony and bloody sweat of our Saviour in the garden that night before He died. "The Lord hath laid upon Him the iniquities of us all" (Isa. liii. 6), and they pressed Him to the ground in bitter agony. Our Lord sweated blood; cannot we shed a tear?

We fall again so easily into the same sins that we think little of them. They are not impressed on our souls as the scourges impressed them on the Sacred Body of our Lord. They were cut deep into the tender flesh of the Lamb of God.

He was brought before the populace, crowned with thorns. How often have we reflected that He stood there, blasphemed and condemned, that we might be forgiven at the judgment day? We grumble at having to go to Confession, perhaps to be kept waiting awhile. Is it as hard as carrying the cross to Calvary? It was our sins that made the cross so heavy. Are we grateful that our Saviour carried it for us?

Behold Him, nailed to the cross, and dying there in agony—that death, our redemption, a free gift to us! But look and study those Wounds in His Hands, Feet, and the lance-wound in His Side, then you will see how much that redemption cost our Lord. If we are only contrite now He will not complain of the price that He paid.

Remember, my dear brethren, the Almighty Father looked down from heaven and beheld that Death on Calvary. He restrained His angels in heaven from liberating the Victim; His justice could look on and see Him die. How God hates sin! Be contrite that your sins have crucified your Lord.

God hates sin, but He pities the sinner; and if, my dear brethren, whilst as yet we were sinners Christ died for us, how much more will He love us if now, turning from our sins, with our hearts full of loving sorrow, we beg of Him to forgive us and make us faithful. Pray for true contrition. This loving sorrow, once alive in our heart, and strengthened by the memory of Christ's Passion and Death, will cast out sin and the old longings for sin: it will make us hate ourselves for having offended God; it will bring us to our knees in the Sacrament of Penance, to give ourselves loyally to Him, Who, even whilst we were sinners, died for us.

Third Sunday of Lent

CONFESSION

"He that hideth his sins shall not prosper, but he, that shall confess and forsake them, shall obtain mercy."—PROV. xxviii. 13.

1. Lest we hide; examination of conscience necessary.
2. Confess; entire, complete list of mortal sins.
3. Forsake; purpose of amendment not enough for all —*e.g.*, forgiveness, restitution, avoiding occasions.
4. Obtain mercy, absolution.

LAST Sunday we tried to waken in our hearts real and loving sorrow for our sins. To-day let us study the next part of the Sacrament of Penance, and see how to prepare for Confession, make the Confession, and obtain Absolution.

There are words in the text that teach us the whole lesson. "He that hideth his sins shall not prosper, but he, that shall confess and forsake them, shall obtain mercy."

We must not hide our sins: therefore it is necessary to examine our conscience; but we must confess and forsake them, and so obtain mercy and forgiveness.

The examination of our conscience is our own duty. If we shirk this or do it negligently, we are hiding our sins from ourselves and from our confessors, but not from God. Mortal sins have to be detested and con-

fessed individually, their number as best we can calculate, and any aggravating circumstances that may change their species. Many seem to think that it is the confessor's duty to see that they tell all. The confessor always helps, and if penitents ask him to examine them, as perhaps they cannot read or they are not well instructed, he will gladly do so. But the obligation of a full, entire confession rests, in the first place, on the penitent. It is trouble, no doubt, and the longer you stay away the more trouble it will be; but if you take as much pains over examining your conscience as you do, when shopping, in seeing that you obtain the right goods and the right change, you need not be scrupulous if any sin is forgotten.

Then, with your heart full of sorrow, your mind with the list of your sins clearly before it, enter into the confessional and lay your sins open before the priest. Confession is the accusation of our sins with the hope of obtaining pardon. It must be entire and complete as far as regards all mortal sin. Be not afraid or ashamed to confess your sins, for the priest is there bound to secrecy. You can seek a priest that does not know you if you wish; but whatever priest it is, he is there solely with the desire of making you friends again with God. If you are afraid or worried how to confess any sin, ask his help, and it will all be made easy. Keep nothing back through shame. It is not only to the priest that you are confessing, but to Almighty God. Tell not a lie to the Holy Ghost. "I will recount to Thee all my years, in the bitterness of my soul." (Isa. xxxviii. 15.)

"He that shall confess and forsake his sins," says the text. What does "forsake" imply? My dear

brethren, "true repentance is a change of life," says St. Ambrose. There are some sins for which a firm purpose of future amendment is not sufficient. At once to prove we are sorry we have to forsake, put right, satisfy for certain sins, or there is no forgiveness. As the Scripture says, "When the wicked turneth himself away from his wickedness and doeth judgment and justice, he shall save his soul alive." (Ezech. xviii. 27.) So those, who are at enmity, are bound to forgive, or they cannot be forgiven. Those, who have wronged another, are bound to restore their neighbour's good name, or the money they have stolen or cheated ; to pay the debts they owe, if it is in their power. And those, who are living in the occasions of sin, are bound to give up those occasions ; and those, who are repeatedly falling into the same sins, are bound to use the means necessary to save them from relapsing. All this is comprised in the word "forsake" your sins. If this forsaking, restitution, and the rest cannot actually be done at once, the priest can take the penitent's solemn promise that he will do so the first opportunity. But remember Who is witness to that promise. God, Who reads your heart and sees if the promise is genuine ; God, Who never forgets ! But if the priest cannot rely on promises—broken, perhaps, many a time—he then has to defer and put off absolution till the debt is paid or the occasion forsaken. How many, alas ! take offence at the priest, if he is driven to this course. How unjust ! The priest cannot please himself. He has to judge justly, and give an especial account to God for all he does as confessor. In hearing confessions, he is endangering his own soul to seek to save the souls of others.

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to

forgive us our sins." (1 John i. 9.) Yes; all leads up to this—forgiveness or absolution. We have excited our hearts to be contrite; we have reckoned up our sins, and prepared the list of our falls and failings; we have humbly confessed against ourselves—nothing hidden, nothing excused, but all plainly and frankly declared; we have accepted the penance given us, promised the required amendments and forsakings; and now comes the blessed moment when the priest, with the power of Christ, says: "Thy sins are forgiven thee." The miracles of the Gospel renewed on behalf of our souls! What gratitude should be ours! Sin banished, our soul alive once more, endowed with grace, washed with the Precious Blood of Christ, by the power of the words of Absolution!

Prove your love and gratitude for being forgiven, by doing what our Lord so often told those He had cured to do: "Go, and sin no more." The future is the test of our past confessions. If we fall again, almost immediately and without a struggle, then, alas! we may fear for our contrition and purpose of amendment—they were not genuine. "Go, and now sin no more." Faithfully, manfully strive to keep out of sin, to honour Him, Who so often and so lovingly has forgiven us.

Fourth Sunday of Lent

THE EASTER COMMUNION

"If any man eat of this Bread, he shall live for ever."—JOHN vi. 52.

1. The miracle of the Gospel, the figure of Holy Communion.
2. Some neglect it, some have to be commanded to receive.
3. The excellence of the Easter Communion: the obedience, more preparation, more remembrance of the Passion.
4. Greatest homage we can pay the Almighty: faith, hope, love.

THE miracle of the Gospel, my dear brethren, brings before us the subject of our thoughts to-day. We have studied the Sacrament of Penance; and contrition, confession, absolution, prepare us for the crowning work of all—a Holy Communion.

A Holy Communion, prepared for by a good Confession, is the one thing necessary at Easter-time. Omit that Communion, and all the works of Lent, fasting, alms, penance, prayers, will not do instead.

The Gospel, then, catches our attention this Sunday, and reminds us all that there is a far greater miracle of mercy awaiting our souls this Easter-time. Our Blessed Lord worked this miracle of feeding the five thousand men with the five barley-loaves to prepare their hearts to believe those words of His, so soon to be uttered: "I am the Bread of Life. . . . If any man eat of this Bread, he shall live for ever." And yet

at that they murmured and left Him, and walked no more with Him.

This occurs again, year after year, in almost every congregation. People, who are very angry if the name of Catholic is denied them, who pay to their Church, send their children to the Church—yea, who come themselves, but for the most part only irregularly—who do all this, draw back and will not come to their Easter Communion. They may think they have reasons or excuses, but they have not one which will not wither away before the eye of the Judge—the same Jesus, Whom they are now despising in neglecting their Easter Communion.

Can it be that we have to be commanded to receive Holy Communion—the greatest honour and privilege that God could give us? "We are so unworthy," is a common excuse. True, but can anyone become less unworthy by disobediently staying away? Come, humbly saying, "Lord, I am not worthy," but yet, whilst owning that, let your faith and hope exclaim, "But only say the word." And that blessed word has been said when we went to Confession: "Thy sins are forgiven thee."

Why were the five loaves multiplied? Out of compassion—to feed them, lest, being hungry, they should faint in the wilderness. So we, too, are offered by the same gracious Lord the food of our souls. The end is not yet. We have to battle on through the wilderness of life, striving our best for heaven; therefore we need food and strength. And here, prepared for us, is the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ our Lord, to feed and nourish our souls.

With a pitying prayer for those, who are intending to neglect their Easter Communion, or who need a com-

mandment to make them do so, let us turn our attention to our own selves, and see how we can best and most worthily fulfil the Paschal precept. Thank God so many go frequently, monthly, to Holy Communion; but the Easter Communion is something special, and has a character of its own.

First, the obedience of it. That stamps upon us the character of true children of the Church. It must be made during the required time.

Then, again, the preparation for it has been greater than for other Communions, and as the preparation, so the devotion, the whole-heartedness of it, should be. It has been said, "One Communion is sufficient to make a saint." Accordingly, as we have spent Lent, more prayers, more sorrow, more self-restraint, so will the graces be, that we shall receive at our Communion.

Again, we come at Easter filled with compassion and love to Him Who said, "Do this in commemoration of Me." We are drawing near the anniversary of the night on which our dear Lord instituted the Blessed Sacrament. He was not content even with going to die for us; He did not want to leave us. So His infinite love led Him to institute the Blessed Eucharist, leaving us His own true Body and Blood, under the appearances of bread and wine, to be the food and sustenance of our souls. He was yearning for friends then; He is yearning for friends now. Even amongst those twelve first communicants, one was a traitor! What fear and humility must fill our souls when we remember that! You see, then, that we cannot be too particular about contrition for our sins, careful examination of conscience, a good confession, and honest resolution to break with sin. Let there be sincerity—transparent sincerity—in our hearts.

By receiving the Blessed Sacrament in such dispositions and in obedience to the Paschal precept, we are offering to God the greatest homage that poor creatures can pay to their Creator—homage of faith. We take His word, "If any man eat of this Bread he shall live for ever," and our Communion is a supreme act of faith. Homage of hope! Unworthy though we are, we trust in Him, Whose Precious Blood, which we receive, washed away the sins of the world. Homage of love! for it is love compels us to receive Him, to unite ourselves with Him, Who is here for love of us. Fill our souls with Thy Divine Presence; be King of our hearts; inflame our will with this one desire, in all things to please and serve Thee, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Passion Sunday

GRACE NEGLECTED IS WITHDRAWN

"Jesus hid Himself."—JOHN viii. 59.

1. The contrast in the Gospel.
2. Neglected grace is withdrawn.
3. Grace; the voice; seeking; knocking.
4. The rejection: "took up stones to cast at Him." Who do this?
5. The penalty: "Jesus hid Himself."
6. Picture our Lord, now mercy, hereafter the Judge.

A DRAMATIC chapter is this, the eighth of St. John's Gospel. It opens with the touching episode of the woman, taken in adultery, being brought to our Lord. The law condemned her to be stoned; they tempted Him, to see how He would judge her. "But Jesus, bowing Himself down, wrote with His finger on the ground." They asked Him again, then He answered: "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her." And He went on writing, and they one by one went out. Had that Divine finger written their sins, and did each one see his own staring at him from the ground? And the woman and our Lord were left alone. "Woman, where are they that accused thee? Hath no man condemned thee? Who said, No man, Lord. Neither will I condemn thee. Go, and now sin no more."

Thus the chapter commences, and ends: "They took up stones to cast at Him. And Jesus hid Himself." What a contrast! Our Lord, full of forgiveness and love, is at length so hurt by the unbelief of the Jews and their rejection of His Divine calls, that He hides Himself and leaves them.

Hid Himself! And what was that? The most dreadful punishment from God. Isaias had foretold it. "I hid My face from him, and he went wandering in the way of his own heart." (lvii. 17.) And our Blessed Lord explains it: "You will seek Me, and you shall not find Me" (John vii. 34); and again: "I go, and you shall seek Me, and you shall die in your sins." (John viii. 21.) It all means the punishment, for rejecting God's grace, is its withdrawal, and then what a life! and oh! God help us, what a death!

For what is this grace of God? The voice of God calling us, and we will not hearken—the voice of God guiding us, checking us, warning us, beseeching us; and disobedient children, we will not heed it.

Grace is the seeking by the Good Shepherd for the sheep that have gone astray. Lost in the wilderness by our own perversity, grace seeks us out, and would bear us back to safety; and we will not.

Grace is Christ knocking at the door of our hearts. He would fain enter in, and comfort us, and win us to Him again. He knocks, and we keep Him knocking, till even the patient One departs.

And this rejecting God's grace is meant by the words, "They took up stones to cast at Him." What more stinging, cutting insult could there be to our Blessed Saviour than rejecting His holy grace? The blessing turns into stone, and we cast it back in the face of the Giver! And who are they, who treat God

so shamefully? Those, who refuse this holy time of Lent to come to their Easter Confession. And it is not only those, who openly live out of communion with the Church, who treat God so insultingly, but those who are entangled in the occasions of sin, and have not the courage to break with them. They will do some day, but not yet! Those in bad habits of sin, who make no manly effort to free themselves. Those, alas! who pretend to be good, but are making bad confessions through false shame or foolish fear. Those who disobey the Church, let their children go to godless schools, miss Mass, and grow up bad Catholics. Those who might make husband or wife, as the case may be, a Catholic, and instead of good example and prayers, they give them scandal. Each one of these God's grace is seeking out this holy time of Lent, and how many are deaf and disobedient, despising that grace which would save their souls.

The misfortune is, even the patience of Jesus Christ can be worn out. For though He is infinitely good, there is a limit to the number of graces that are offered us. There is a limit to the number of our sins, and we do not know how near we are to the last one. The last one! Commit that, and then mercy is no more.

Do not put God off. Think how insulting it is. Our Lord comes full of mercy and love, ready to say to us, as He did to the woman: "Neither will I condemn thee. Go, and now sin no more." Fear, then, to delay your repentance. Reject not His proffered graces any longer, lest they be withdrawn, and Jesus hide Himself. Oh, what a life that would be, and no Jesus near us to say, "I am the way, the truth, and the life"! (John xiv. 6.) We should be left groping in the darkness and the crooked ways of our own bad

life. And oh, what a death! "I go, and you shall seek Me, and you shall die in your sins." (John viii. 21.) No Jesus there to whisper words of pardon and mercy to our poor souls.

Picture our Blessed Lord now, in the time of mercy, and then, when it is too late. Now He is the sweet Saviour, Who does not hide Himself from sinners. He welcomes them when they fall at His feet, as that poor woman must have done when she heard, "Neither will I condemn thee." She was to be stoned, and the stones were turned into forgiveness by our Lord Jesus, and He was stoned instead. Come now to Him, with true contrition and a hearty determination to break with sin, and there is abundant grace yet, and the Saviour will lovingly forgive you.

Look at the other picture! Then, when the day of mercy is over, when He has hidden Himself from the stones of rejection, when He is no longer the Saviour, but the Judge! Isaias pictures Him: "His wrath burneth and is heavy to bear: His lips are filled with indignation, and His tongue as a devouring fire." (xxx. 27.) The outraged mercy of God, His rejected grace, His despised love, have changed the Saviour into the avenging Judge!

It is in our power to come to Him now and receive forgiveness, or guiltily to wait, to go on rejecting His grace, till He comes to us then to condemn us.

How can we hesitate one moment to make the choice? Dear Lord, I come now, in humility and sorrow, to beg pardon and forgiveness; do not hide Thyself from me.

Palm Sunday or Good Friday

THE MERCY OF GOD, AND HOW IT WAS RECEIVED

"They will reverence My Son."—MATT. xxi. 37.

1. Who brought God's mercy into the world? His Son. His Name, words, actions, sufferings—all mercy.
2. How received? By His kinsfolk at Nazareth; by His disciples; the part His friends had even in His death.
3. Is it now as it was then? God's mercy the same. Do we reject it or receive it?

IT is fitting in Holy Week to meditate on God's mercy and how it is received. Who brought God's mercy into the world? Of old, when prophets spoke, it was not of mercy, but judgment and punishment. No, not angel, nor prophet, nor patriarch was the messenger of mercy; it was the Son of God, made Man for us. "They will reverence My Son."

See how everything in His coming spoke of mercy. His very Name, foretold by the angel, is the Name of mercy—Jesus the Saviour.

His words, words of mercy. When the Baptist sent his disciples to Him, He said: "Go and relate to John what you have heard and seen. The blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead rise again, and the poor have the gospel preached to them." (Matt. xi. 4, 5.) And again: "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." (Luke xix. 10.)

His actions were in accord with His words. The examples course through your memory. The many blind whom, at their entreaty, He touched, and they went away rejoicing; the poor bent woman, who only touched His garment, and she was made whole; the palsied, the lepers, the very dead, who felt the touch of His mercy; His mingling with publicans and sinners, calling Matthew, the tax-gatherer, to be an Apostle; letting Magdalene, the sinner, kiss His feet and be His Mother's friend.

Enough: name, words, actions, all speak of mercy. But He was all-powerful; they cost Him little. Lest we might think that, He endured His sufferings and submitted to die on the cross to prove His mercy—"He was wounded for our iniquities, He was bruised for our sins." (Isa. liii. 5.) "When as yet we were sinners, Christ died for us." (Rom. v. 8, 9.) All mercy, life and death.

How was His mercy received on earth? Welcomed by all? Stray words in the Gospel would lead us to think so. "When they found Him, they said to Him, All seek for Thee." (Mark i. 37.) "Behold, the whole world is gone after Him." (John xii. 19.) And after the miracle of the five loaves they wanted to take Him and make Him King.

But let facts answer how God's mercy was received. He that was the Way and the Truth and the Life dwelt at Nazareth many years. How was God's mercy received there? St. Luke will tell us. Our Lord rose up to read in their synagogue. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, wherefore He hath anointed Me, to preach the gospel to the poor He hath sent Me, to heal the contrite of heart . . . to preach the acceptable year of the Lord and the day

of reward." And He added, "This day is fulfilled this Scripture in your ears." And what did His friends and kinsfolk do? "They were filled with anger. And they rose up and thrust Him out of the city, and brought Him to the brow of the hill . . . that they might cast Him down headlong." (Luke iv. 16-29.) God's mercy, and how it was received!

Again, when at length He approached the subject so dear to His Sacred Heart, the Institution of the most Blessed Sacrament, what happened then? How was the announcement of the crowning mercy of all received? "The Jews therefore murmured at Him, because He said, I am the living Bread which came down from heaven. . . . How can this man give us His flesh to eat? Jesus said, My flesh is meat indeed, and My Blood is drink indeed. . . . He that eateth this Bread shall live for ever. . . . Many of His disciples, hearing it, said, This saying is hard, and who can hear it? . . . After this many of His disciples went back, and walked no more with Him." (John vi. 41-67.)

Does it not seem as if God's mercy was a failure? His kinsfolk sought to kill Him because He preached; His disciples murmured at His goodness and deserted Him. And, my dear brethren, let us go further. His death itself! How was that brought about? Oh, you will answer, His enemies did that. No; the most cruel part of it was that His friends had such a share in it. Who sold Him to His enemies? One, who had been made a friend of for three years, who had witnessed all His miracles, who had preached in His name, who had just made his first Communion. He gave the mercy of God the welcome of a traitor's kiss! And the chief of all the Apostles, coward as

he was then—forgive us, dear St. Peter, for saying it—denied his Master, and swore that he knew Him not. And the rest of the twelve fled and left Him. Oh, what a welcome to the mercy of God, preparing for the sacrifice of Calvary! And were all those, who reviled Him, who cried, "Away with Him! crucify Him!"—were all those His enemies? Many of the populace there had been His friends on Palm Sunday. The same voices, when He had been triumphant, had cried, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" Was there no one to stand up and say a word in His defence? Not one of those—surely friends—whose eyes He had opened, to whom He had given speech, whose crippled limbs He had straightened and strengthened?

Cruel facts, then, show us how God's mercy was treated when it would fain redeem the world. We see the injustice, the ingratitude of it all is quite evident.

There is one momentous question to ask ourselves—Is it now as it was then? God's mercy is the same; the same Jesus here; the same sacred Name we invoke and reverence; the same blessed words from the Gospels console us and instruct us; His actions the same. For our souls are now the recipients of His mercy. He cures the blindness, the dumbness, the palsy, the leprosy of our souls. He feeds them, far more wonderfully than He did the five thousand. And His sufferings are brought before us, made the object of our devotion, and commemorated in every Mass that is offered. His mercy the same then.

But is it received now as then? Is it outraged now? We are indignant at the Jews: are we any better ourselves? Look and find yourselves—either in the synagogue at Nazareth, grumbling against God, rejecting some truth, unwilling to accept His mercy.

Or, see yourselves amongst those, who deserted Him —you who neglect your Easter Communion, who put off time after time, who resent the priest pressing for attendance at Mass and frequent Communion.

And those, who have committed mortal sin, they know where to find themselves. They recognise their own voices—" Crucify Him !" Away with the Saviour, and give us an easy life of pleasure, of indulgence in our sins. Our mortal sins are the welcome we have given to the mercy of God.

By a good Confession and Communion let us give God's mercy a true welcome ; let us promise Him fidelity and loyalty, and choose Him now King of our hearts.

Easter

THE VICTORY OF CHRIST

'Lo, this is our God . . . and He will save us."—Isa. xxv. 9.

1. The Resurrection the proof of the Divinity of Christ.
2. His victory was over death, over sin, over the powers of the world, over the hearts of men.
3. The Church continues the victory over death by transferring our souls to the Church triumphant; over sin by absolution; over the world by its vitality; over the hearts of men, as the Easter Communions prove.

This is the day of the victory of Jesus Christ. In rising from the dead He proved He was the conqueror. "If Christ be not risen again, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain, and we are found false witnesses of God. . . . Your faith is vain, for you are yet in your sins. . . . We are of all men most miserable. . . . But Christ is risen from the dead." (1 Cor. xv. 14-20.)

So let us, then, my dear brethren, to the glory and honour of God, to the encouragement of our own souls, celebrate the victory of the Resurrection.

Christ was the conqueror over death. He was dead and buried, and all Jerusalem knew it. And His enemies remembered His words better than His disciples: "That seducer said, while He was yet alive, After three days I will rise again." (Matt. xxvii. 63.) So, for fear of that, they placed a guard at the

sepulchre, lest His disciples might steal His body, and say that He was risen. And after the Resurrection, His enemies became the first evangelists, and spread the tidings through the city. Good Friday is past, and this is Easter Day. The Crucified is risen; His wounds are His glory; the dead is immortal; the Man of Sorrows is the King of Heaven, victorious after the battle.

Christ was victorious over sin. "The Lord hath laid upon Him the iniquities of us all," (Isa. liii. 6,) and He expiated them by dying on the cross. Sinners, no longer the children of wrath and perdition, on Easter Day hear their Saviour say to Mary Magdalene: "Go to My brethren, and say to them, I ascend to My Father and to your Father, My God and your God." (John xx. 17.)

He was a conqueror likewise over the powers of the world. What a league had been made against Him! Pharisees, high-priests, Herod, and Pilate—bigotry, envy, paganism, banded together. They had tried to ignore and discredit Him, and yet they had to own, "Behold, the whole world is gone after Him." (John xii. 19.) They had insulted and blasphemed Him, treated Him with every indignity and cruelty, crucified Him; and He was risen, glorious and impassible! They tried to stamp out His very Name, and they lived to see Him the one power believed in and adored.

This victory of Jesus Christ, my dear brethren, is not the victory of a day: it is a victory for all time. For He rose from the dead, the Saviour of the world, claiming the allegiance and the love of the hearts of men. Many fail in their duty and ignore their God, but we will not think of them to-day; rather let us

recall with joy the memory of those holy men and women, saints of God, the fruits of His Redemption, the glory of His Resurrection. The victory, He loves the most, is over the hearts of men. And the Saints give Him the worship and love of their hearts. There is no half-heartedness, no fear, no bargain with them; it is "all for Jesus." "Lo, this is our God, and He will save us."

This veneration and exaltation of Christ, which began on Easter Day, has lived and thrived through all the centuries of time until this very day. No rival has ever risen to claim the throne of the hearts of men from the risen Saviour Jesus Christ.

And where is this Conqueror now? In heaven. Yes; but where else? In His Church. "Behold I am with you all days . . . even to the consummation of the world." (Matt. xxviii. 20.) The Church is the partner of His victory, and as Christ is, so is His Church. "Through Him and with Him and in Him," its mission in the world has been one long triumph. "This is the victory that overcometh the world, our faith." (1 John v. 4.)

Like its Master, the Church is victorious over death. How? Because it does not forsake us at the graveside. The mourners tarry there, and then in grief retire; but not so the Holy Church. It transfers the souls of the faithful to the Church triumphant in heaven; it bridges over from time to eternity; its prayers and blessings bear us on to the Saviour Who died for us, and rose again for our salvation.

And over sin is the Church victorious. For this is the very work of Lent and of our Easter Confession. All the prayers, and sorrow, and penances of poor sinners were all to this end, that they might be fit to

rise at the word of the Church — "I absolve thee." Sin is overcome.

And again, like its Master, the Church is victorious over the powers of the world. The Resurrection commenced a new life, which the world cannot assail, and the Church draws its vitality from its Lord's. Three hundred years of persecution only served to let the seed of the Church germinate, stamped into the ground and watered by the blood of the martyrs. Then came the springtime and the marvellous growth of the Church. Heresies assailed it, with emperors to back them up in their infamous designs, but they only served to urge the Church, by its General Councils, to make more precise and definite its holy doctrines. The barbarians overran Europe, but they were soon taught to reverence the Name of Christ. The Church became civilizer, cultivator, builder, as well as apostle, until the barbarians became nations ready to take the place of those effete races, whose kingdoms were tottering to their fall. The Saracens and the Turks followed on, but the result of the Church's warfare was always victory. Then the Reformation and the defection of Northern Europe; but there were new continents discovered, and the Cross of Christ claimed them and won them to make up for the children that had revolted from her. Then there is the infidelity and godlessness of later days, but all that is counterbalanced by the increase of unity, loyalty, and piety within the Church itself.

For, lastly, like its Master, the Church loves to be supreme over the hearts of men. And in this twentieth century it can exultantly thank God, on this Easter Day, for the number of its children. It can thank God that over the whole world, in a thousand dioceses, in

countless churches, the Resurrection is celebrated with fervent devotion. Hundreds of thousands have made their Easter Communion, have pledged again their loyalty and love to the Church and the risen Saviour. With one voice they have proclaimed Him conqueror over sin and death and the powers of the world, and King for ever over the hearts of men. "Lo, this is our God, and He will save us."

Low Sunday

THE TEACHING OF CHRIST AFTER THE RESURRECTION

"Then He opened their understanding."—LUKE xxiv. 45.

1. The doctrines explained during these forty days specially important.
2. They were: Christ appealed to and explained the Scriptures.
3. Christ gave His Apostles the power of forgiving sins.
4. The risen Christ "took bread and blessed it": the Holy Eucharist.

THERE was a Divine significance in our Blessed Lord's appearing to the disciples at various times during the forty days after His Resurrection.

He had proved to them that He was God by rising from the dead. So His words and actions during these days are clothed with a special significance and power. During these appearances Christ enlightened and taught His disciples, and emphasized the important points of His doctrine. It is most necessary for us to know these truths and to hold fast to them as the very words of God—of the risen Saviour, glorious and immortal.

What are these important lessons? First, our Lord appealed to Scripture and explained it. St. Luke says (xxiv. 27): "And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures

the things that were concerning Him." This was during the walk of the two disciples to Emmaus on Easter Day, as "they talked together of all the things that had happened." And Jesus drew nigh and asked them why they were sad. They told Him of their grief, as He, Whom they had hoped to have redeemed Israel, was put to death. Then our Lord replied: "O foolish and slow of heart to believe in all things which the prophets have spoken." Then He explained the Scriptures to them, and showed them that He was the Messias, the Saviour, that was to come.

As the Master, so the Church. It appeals to Scripture, and explains the Scripture. The Church can find authority for all its doctrines in the Scripture; but it claims the right of explaining the Scripture to its children. It does not put the Bible in the hands of all—busy, unlearned, worldly-minded—and let them pick and choose and scramble for their religion; but it teaches, like a wise and prudent mother, adapting its lessons to the minds of its hearers.

The Gospels and Epistles were written after the Church was founded, and the New Testament is the more important part of the sacred writings. So it is not the Bible that has made the Church, but the Church that has made the Bible, and cared for it, and had it translated and explained, and handed it down from generation to generation. The Scriptures, then, and their explanation was the first important lesson taught by the risen Saviour. "He opened their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures."

And immediately the second great lesson follows: "that penance and remission of sins should be preached in His Name to all nations." (Luke xxiv. 47.) Or, as St. John describes Christ's first appearance to His

Apostles, Jesus said: "Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them." (John xx. 22, 23.) From that day of its institution the Sacrament of Penance has been believed in and practised by the Holy Church. Search through the successive ages, and in every one plain, unmistakable evidence can be found that forgiveness of sin, through the Sacrament of Penance, was practised in the Catholic Church. Find a country where a missioner's foot has trod where that belief has not been established. Ask of the poorest of the poor, the most unlettered and neglected Catholic, and he will tell you that his priest has power, the same as the Apostles first received it, of forgiving sins. He will tell you how he is bound to go to Confession, and that his hope is that, after all his sins and negligences, he may receive forgiveness of them all through the Sacrament of Penance, and so be saved.

The words of Christ, "whose sins you shall forgive," were the words of Almighty God, and through all these centuries they are still heard and reverenced: they are still the ordinance of the Holy Catholic Church.

Your minds have anticipated my words, and you will have said in your hearts, "Our Blessed Lord would also recall and emphasize the power and the love of the Holy Eucharist." Yes, St. Luke tells us (xxiv. 30, 31), "And it came to pass, whilst He was at table with them, He took bread, and blessed and brake, and gave to them. And their eyes were opened, and they knew Him." The consecration of the bread and wine, the Sacrifice of the Altar, the Holy Mass, has ever been the centre of the worship of the Catholic Church. The Acts of the Apostles

tell us of the early days (ii. 42): "And they were persevering in the doctrine of the Apostles and in the communication of the breaking of bread." And St. Paul says, showing the continuation of the custom: "For as often as you eat this bread and drink the chalice, you shall show the death of the Lord." (1 Cor. xi. 26.)

The world cannot shut its eyes to the fact, that the doctrine of the Real Presence has been believed, and the Sacrifice of Mass offered, and Holy Communion received, in every land and in every age. The cathedrals, the churches, the little village spire, speak to all of the home of Jesus Christ in the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist. The world cannot deny it; and the devil knows well where the Sacred Presence dwells. Let it not be that we, for whom Christ thus dwells in the Tabernacle, should "be foolish and slow of heart." Let us not grow accustomed to holy things and think little of them. If we have our Blessed Lord amongst us, and know it and believe it, what excuse can we find if we do not worship Him, visit Him, and receive Him frequently

Be grateful, then, for the blessing of belonging to God's true Church—in which we have the Scriptures preserved and explained to us; in which we have the Sacrament of Penance to forgive us our sins; in which we have the Blessed Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist for our adoration, our sacrifice, our food. Let us be grateful for these truths and blessings, and guard them zealously and well.

Second Sunday after Easter

THE TEACHING OF CHRIST AFTER THE RESURRECTION (*continued*)

"Then He opened their understanding."—LUKE xxiv. 45.

The special lessons continued:

1. The Primacy of Peter.
2. Church commissioned to preach to all nations.
3. Test of miracles to prove Christ's Church.
4. His Church to be imperishable.

LET us again to-day, my dear brethren, study the important doctrines to which our Lord gave prominence during these days from Easter to the Ascension. The first three points, as we saw last Sunday, were the Scriptures, the Sacraments of Penance and the Holy Eucharist.

The next is the Primacy of Peter. Already, our Divine Lord had singled out Peter on several occasions. He had changed his name from Simon to Peter, the rock; for Peter had answered for the rest when Christ had asked: "But whom do you say that I am?" "Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God!" You may be sure, that in these days of enlightening and strengthening the Apostles, something more will be said. Yes; you will find it in St. John xxi. 15-17. Three times over "Jesus said to Simon Peter, Simon, son of John, lovest thou Me more than these? He

saith to Him, Yea, Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee. He saith to him, Feed My lambs." Here is Peter's commission to be the shepherd of the flock. That the Apostles and disciples took this as a formal installing Peter as their head is borne out by the position Peter fills in the infant Church hereafter. No Apostle gainsaid his authority; and when he died, it was not St. John or another Apostle that succeeded him—no, the one consecrated for that purpose. And the glorious line of successors has continued ever since. Empires have risen, have fallen into decay, all traces of them obliterated, but Peter's successors, the Popes of Rome, have, link by link, forged out their wondrous chain of succession.

The next point is when our Blessed Lord commissions the Apostles to preach His doctrine throughout the whole world, to make His Church Catholic. It had not to be the Jewish, the Greek, the Russian, the English Church, but the Catholic, universal Church. "Going, therefore, teach ye all nations." (Matt. xxviii. 19.) "Go ye into the whole world and preach the gospel to every creature." (Mark xvi. 15.)

The history of the Church nobly proves how it has obeyed its Master. From the days of the Apostles to the very present, there have always been holy men, zealous to carry the good tidings of the Gospel to the heathen and the savage.

And still another word of Christ and its fulfilment by the faithful disciples. Christ made miracles a test of the true Church. He gave them the power, and they manifested it. "And these signs shall follow them that believe. In My Name they shall cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing,

it shall not hurt them ; they shall lay their hands upon the sick, and they shall recover." (Mark xvi. 17, 18.) The Acts of the Apostles show that these words were immediately verified to the letter. And saint after saint in the early ages were blessed with the same power. It is often said that the days of miracles have gone by. With the need, the power returns. The object of miracles was chiefly to impress unbelievers, and win their reverence and submission. Amongst those who have had opportunities to know and recognise the Church of Christ miracles are very uncommon. There is proof enough without them. But in the sixteenth century the Apostolic powers revived in the person of St. Francis Xavier, the apostle of the Indies. Miracles were needed for those poor benighted peoples. And St. Francis was blessed by God with the gift of tongues ; he healed diseases, he raised the dead to life.

The last word that our Lord spoke to His Apostles promised undying life to His Church. "And behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world." (Matt. xxviii. 20.) I, the risen Saviour—I, glorious and immortal, am with you all days. Faith in that word has sustained both the ruler and the children of the Church through all the trials of succeeding ages. Its enemies may seem to prevail. For instance, for three hundred years every Pope won the martyr's crown ; and kingdoms have rebelled against the Church of Christ ; and fifteen times have the Popes been driven forth or led captive from the city of Rome. But, in spite of all, calm and undismayed, the Church has gone on its way—"They going forth preached everywhere" (Mark xvi. 20)—its losses in one region amply compensated by new kingdoms accepting the

yoke of Christ ; and, time bringing its peaceful revenge, schisms and heresies have died, and the poor wanderers, that they had led astray, have found their true home once more under Peter and the Popes of Rome.

All this, that we have studied, my dear brethren, last Sunday and to-day, is what was said and done after the Resurrection by the Jesus Christ, Whom all Christians must acknowledge their Lord and their God. In what Church can we find these seven emphatic points still adhered to ? No Church can be the Church of Christ, unless it holds these most important doctrines. Who has had the power to do away with anything that Christ has laid down ? These doctrines are : holding the Scriptures and explaining them ; the Sacrament of Penance ; the Real Presence in the Holy Eucharist ; the primacy of Peter ; the commission to preach and baptize everywhere ; the gift of miracles to confirm the doctrine ; the imperishable vitality to exist even to the end of the world.

There is only one Church that claims, and has ever claimed, to hold fast to each and all these truths. If it fails in holding to them, the Almighty will have lost His power, the God of Truth failed in His Word, the Risen Saviour found wanting.

We Catholics alone have all. How can we show our gratitude but by treasuring our holy Faith, living up to it strenuously, and being ready and willing even to die for it ?

Third Sunday after Easter

THE SHORTNESS OF LIFE

"A little while."—JOHN xvi. 16.

1. Repeated so often. Why ?
2. The careless have a little while of pleasure, of neglected religion, of affluence, and an eternity of pain, remorse, and misery.
3. The good have a little while of carefulness—security for ever ; of labour—rest ; of obedience—glory.
4. The example of the Forty Martyrs, *paulisper sustine*.

THESE words, my dear brethren, were not uttered by our Blessed Lord without a purpose. "A little while." What is this that He says—"A little while"? They are so short, so simple, that anyone can remember them. And happy should we be if we had them continually echoing in our souls ! They would help us to go on through life, earnest in good, unscathed by evil, for that "little while" is the key to eternity.

How is it that men living in sin can be content and amuse themselves, and be quite taken up by this world ? Because they forget that it is only for a little while. A little while of self-indulgence, of seeking after pleasure, of gratifying every desire, followed by an eternity of pain. Not a drop of cold water to cool their tongue ; not a kind word for all eternity.

A little while of neglecting prayer, of putting God off, of evading every duty demanded by the Church.

It is all done so easily ; nothing seems to come of it—no, not for a little while ; but the end comes all too soon for the careless and the slothful, and then remorse for ever and for ever. What was the good of all that neglect ? What came of it ? The bitterness of eternally asking that unavailing question ! If they had only asked it before it was too late !

A little while of affluence, social success, of being somebody in their own little circle—where is the harm of it ? "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God." (Mark x. 23.) For where was God during that little while ? There was no time for God in business hours ; friends, too, had to be entertained—one had to be like others. So in very deed there was no time to give to God at all. No ; but an eternity of misery will be exacted by the great God, Who was begrudged a thought, a prayer, a Mass in their life on earth.

It is a strange thing, is this "little while." It is utterly worthless if we look at past sin. And yet all-important is it, for heaven depends upon it. In this life we are only sure of the uncertainty of life ; at the best it is only a little while. Good people, devout Catholics, are therefore careful of time. They know their days are few, swiftly speeding on, and the end hidden. Hence the importance of this little while, so short in itself, so long, so eternal, in its consequences.

What is it, then, to labour for a little while ? Ask the Saints why they gave up their nights to prayer ; why they were so incessant in their labours for souls ; how it was they knew no fatigue, cared nothing for being worn out. Their answer is, There is only a little while for labour, and an eternity for rest. How can we do enough for the good God ?

And instead of being despondent when day after day we are tempted, tripping, beset by sin, we must re-

member that it is only for a little while. The Master is only seeing if we are worthy of Him. He will not desert us in our struggle, or abandon us when we feel that we can do no more. "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation, for when he hath been proved, he shall receive the crown of life, which God has promised to them that love Him." (Jas. i. 12.)

And obedience for a little while in humility to the will of God; readiness to accept anything He sends—poverty, sickness, trials of all kinds—the world may wonder at it, but is it not true wisdom? In so doing are we not imitating our Blessed Lord? "He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross. For which cause God also hath exalted Him, and hath given Him a name which is above all names." (Phil. ii. 8, 9.)

What power, then, this text should have over careless sinners, wakening them to see the falseness of their contentment; and over devout souls, too, urging them to renewed endeavours, more patient acceptance of hardships, more determined perseverance.

These words have been the making of many a saint—the world abandoned for a hermitage, life given up for a martyr's crown.

Think of that blessed band, the Forty Martyrs, left to be frozen to death on the ice. Stripped, frost-bitten, perishing, to them how long that winter's night would seem. But they knew it was only a little while, and thinking of eternity, they prayed for perseverance. "We are forty—may forty persevere!" Alas! one turned coward; the little while of perishing was too much for him. The guards relieved him, warmed him, fed him, and in a little while he died! The pity of it! Only a little while longer of courage, and he would have been a saint for ever.

But another stepped into his place. This soldier from the bank had seen a vision of crowns coming down from heaven for the martyrs ; but he could only count thirty-nine crowns, and there were forty victims. When the one gave way, he understood about the missing crown. The vision gave him the faith, and stripping himself, crying out that he would be a Christian, he joined them on the ice. And the martyrs' prayer was heard : " Let forty persevere !"

At daybreak, as they were carting the frozen corpses away, one of the martyrs, the youngest, was found to be alive. The guards, hoping to pervert him, left him ; but his mother, who was watching on the bank, raised him in her arms. To fondle him ? No ; to cast him in the cart with the others. " Bear up a little while," she said ; " behold, Christ stands at the door, helping thee." And as that heroic mother carried him, he died in her arms. His little while was over.

When we come to die may these words encourage us in that last, sad hour. May pains, partings, fears, all be soothed by the whisper of faith—" only for a little while." St. Paul says : " For patience is necessary for you, that, doing the will of God, you may receive the promise. For yet a little, and a very little while, and He that is to come will come, and will not delay." (Heb. x. 36, 37.)

But when the light of heaven dawns upon us, oh ! then it will no longer be for a little while. The seed of a little while will have grown into a happy eternity. Is it not true that, if these words were only remembered by us, we should lead earnest and devout lives, and make secure our future happiness ? A mystery of the wonderful mercy of God, that prayer, obedience, perseverance in His service for a little while can merit eternal glory.

Fourth Sunday after Easter

OUR DESTINY

"Whither goest Thou ?"—John xvi. 5.

1. Everyone keen on their business in life.
2. How few keen about their souls.
3. The "whither" our soul is going cannot be important, the departure a long time off, or can be rectified. Is it so ?
4. During Mass is the time to see "whither."
5. When will the negligent see to their soul ?
6. The end, and the road to it.

This is the important question for everybody. In concerns of this world how keen men are about the "whither" they are going ! The captain of a ship, taking his observations, studying the charts, watching the wind ; anxious if a fog envelop the ship, or a gale arises. Why ? "Whither goest thou ?" he asks himself. The engine-driver speeding along, his eye now on the signals, now on the register ; his hand ready to check the headlong rush. Why ? He is keen about the safety of the train. And the man of business, he keeps his books, balances his accounts, looks to every detail, is absorbed in the one question, making money or losing it ? "Whither goest thou ?"

Everyone seems on the alert, my dear brethren, except about their souls. Our soul is hastening through the short years of life ; how seldom do we question it—"Whither goest thou ?"

Whither we are going cannot be important, or we should be anxious. Can we come back again and make a second journey? Are we bound, are we compelled to go at all? For most men seem to be satisfied with this world; to have forgotten that they are simply wayfarers; to have something that they have fixed their hearts upon, that makes them content and even longing to stay.

It must be, then, that our going is a long time off; that there will be years of warning and preparation. That is not so. The very opposite is the truth, for our Blessed Lord has said: "Watch ye, therefore, because you know not the day nor the hour." (Matt. xxv. 13.) That we are going to the home of our eternity is a solemn truth, and how childish and foolish it is of us to try and forget it, and not, rather, to be hourly solicitous to see if we are going safely and securely.

The "whither" we are going is to our Eternal Father. The dreadful chance is He may disown us instead of giving us a welcome. We may be cast out into exterior darkness, or the angels may lead us into paradise—all depends upon ourselves.

Here in God's house, during Holy Mass, we can ask our souls seriously, "Whither goest thou?" We can see whether we have wandered from the path of duty or kept to it manfully each week: whether we have loitered, grown lazy, and lost heart. And each Sunday we can ask Him, Who said "I am the Way," to help us once again—to start us on the right road; to show us the direction; to give us strength to persevere. How glad we shall be some day if regularly our soul has studied this question, "Whither goest thou?"

But what will those do who never come to Holy

Mass, or come just when they like, or are careless and distracted when they are present? Are they taking any observation whither their soul is going? Have they no fear that the end is nearer than they expect? No, they have no fear. The worries or the pleasures of life give them no time to think. The voice of conscience cannot make itself heard amidst the gossip, the quarrellings or laughter of their foolish days. If the thought does, by the grace of God, manage to catch their attention for a moment, they put it aside with an excuse. They will put their souls in order sometime or other, they flatter themselves, but not now. Sometime, but not God's time. Sometime is any time, and any time is often no time! And they trust the safety of their immortal souls to sometime, instead of seeing to their security now.

"Whither goest thou?" is a question that requires more than an answer. It has to rule and guide our lives. Yet men leave it to be answered in sickness, in the delirium of fever; to be answered when speech has failed, and they can only look round with mute, imploring eyes; ay, leave it to be answered in the consternation of a sudden death! When we come to die these words, "Whither goest thou?" may haunt us then. Never to have thought of it, never to have cared for our poor, neglected soul till then! With all our sins upon us, what a mockery will the beautiful prayers of the Church sound then! "Go forth, Christian soul"—oh, horror! go forth! Whither?

Oh, my poor soul, that "whither" should have been our care and anxiety years and years ago!

Please God, we that are here are not putting off the saving of our soul to the end. We will not insult our Blessed Saviour by putting Him off. We will say

now, "Thou art the way: lead me aright." Let us thank God for this word, "Whither goest thou?" and pray that it may live in our memories, to awaken us to our duty, if we are growing careless; to speak to us in the hour of temptation; to leave us no peace, if we have fallen, till we repent again. What a change that memory would make in our prayers! how fervent our Masses and Holy Communions! what contentment and resignation it would give us in all the sorrows of life! What do trials and hardships matter if our soul is sure whither it is going?

Turn your eyes away from this present life; do not let it take up all your interest and love. Look at the road that leads whither you should be tending. It is not lonely and bleak. It is not the road leading to exile. It is the road to your Heavenly Father. Look at it, and you will see it peopled by those you know, who are beckoning you on and encouraging you. The Saints have all trod that road, and their example is a beacon of light before us. Take heart and be manful. Little children have cheerfully toiled along; poor sinners, in spite of the burden of all their past, have started and have persevered. And your Angel Guardian is ready, if you have the goodwill, to take you by the hand, and lead you safely, as Raphael did Tobias.

And when you reach the "whither" will not all your toil be well repaid? The eternal rest, the security, the contented joy will more than recompense the carefulness, the watchfulness, the prayers, the Masses, the Communions, the sufferings of this short life. It will be our eternal blessedness then that we trained our souls to heed "Whither goest thou?"

Fifth Sunday after Easter

DUTY OF PRAYER

"Amen, amen, I say to you, if you ask the Father anything in My Name, He will give it you."—JOHN xvi. 23.

1. Subject of prayer forced on us.
2. What is it?
3. Its power with God.
4. Its power over ourselves.
5. Why past prayer, perhaps, so often a failure? Tepidity, distractions, selfishness.
6. Pray always: it is our daily food.

IT is evident from the Gospel, and from this being Rogation Week, that the subject for our thoughts to-day should be prayer. "If you ask the Father anything in My Name, He will give it you." The Sacraments and Mass, the priest and the Church, are not always at hand to help us; but everyone, at any moment and anywhere, can pray. Prayer is the great means to help us to gain heaven. The Council of Trent says: "The use of prayer is necessary for our salvation."

The simple answer of the Catechism tells us what prayer is: "The raising up of our minds and hearts to God."

The raising up, the lifting us from this earth, where the tepid are allured by the false promises of an easy, worldly life, where even the good are often discouraged

for want of taking a loftier view of life. Our surroundings have a great influence even upon the strongest-minded, and prayer lifts us up from these surroundings, lest we become simply children of this world, and forget that we are children of God.

Yes, it is to God that prayer raises us up: God, our Father, Who is watching us from heaven, proud of our endeavours, and inspiring us to be faithful—the God, Who is our end and our eternal reward.

And what does it raise up to God? Not our voice only, but the best and noblest of our nature—our mind, that we may know Him more and more; our will, that we may centre all our intentions, interests upon Him; our heart, that there may be only one love, the motive of our life. "The love of Christ presseth us." (2 Cor. v. 14.)

This is prayer; but what does it do, what is its power, what does it accomplish? By prayer we honour God; influence Him so that, in spite of our sins and unworthiness, He listens to us and grants our requests. "Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me." (Ps. xlix. 15.) "You shall pray to Me, and I will hear you. You shall seek Me, and you shall find Me, when you shall seek Me with all your heart." (Jer. xxix. 12, 13.) When God placed man in this vale of miseries He bestowed upon his weakness—yea, upon his sinfulness—a power that appeals effectually to His mercy—the power of prayer! When a man sets himself to pray, and to pray earnestly, his very helplessness becomes a power. Our Lord has made use of extraordinary comparisons to show that everything is possible to him who prays.

And on ourselves, its power and influence is no

less. Prayer enlightens and strengthens the will to make a pure intention, to seek only God's glory, to live for Him. And with that, it gives us a relish for the work of God, and a keenness in His service. This explains how to the Saints long hours of prayer seemed but a blissful moment. It tells us how cloisters were filled in the olden days, and the deserts peopled with those, who knew how to pray, to whom prayer had become their food, their breath, their very life.

Our past prayer would not have led us to think this—that prayer had such power and influence on God and our own souls. For this we have to blame ourselves : it is our own fault. Three things can spoil, even ruin, our prayers.

Tepidity—that half-heartedness that we have in God's service. Prayers are hurried, prayers are shortened, prayers are many a time omitted, through sloth and love of ease. Those are not the prayers of which St. Hilary speaks when he says : "With the cries of our prayers we must fight against the devil."

Distractions are the second cause of the sterility of our prayers—distractions that come and steal away our thoughts before they rise up to God. How often have we addressed Almighty God with our thoughts wandering, and our affections choked with cares and jealousies ! Negligent and wilful have been our distractions, because we have not prepared our soul for the holy work of prayer. Should we not cleanse our minds and hearts of vain thoughts, let alone sinful ones, before entering into the presence of the Most High, as we do in prayer ?

And the third reason why so many prayers are unanswered is our selfishness. We only turn to God when we are driven. In fear, misery, illness—oh, we

can think of God, and selfishly cry for help. In health, in comfort, in enjoyment, how easily is God forgotten! He, therefore, often seems to be deaf to these prayers in order to show us our selfishness—that we are not honouring God, but clamouring for something that we need.

Prayer, then, is the great power that Almighty God has bestowed upon our weakness and sinfulness. The misery of it all is that men will not come to Him that they may have life. Come to God in prayer day after day. Prayer is the daily bread of our souls. It is the manna from heaven. And as the Israelites could not lay by a store of manna, but were compelled to gather it morning after morning, so we have every day to pray, "pray without ceasing," or our souls will be weakened and starved and perish.

Thank God for this great means of salvation. Realize what it is, the raising up of our minds and hearts to God—how it transforms our poor soul, and how the good God has given it such power even over Himself. It is the cry of the children, and the Father cannot be deaf. "If you ask the Father anything in My Name, He will give it you."

Sunday within the Octave of the Ascension

CHARITY

"Before all things have a constant, mutual charity."—1 Pet. iv. 8.

1. St. Peter thrusts the subject upon us.
2. Charity often the last virtue good people acquire.
3. What charity should do.
4. And should be constant and mutual.
5. In being charitable we are imitating Christ, forgiving, speaking kindly, and doing kind deeds.

It is an authoritative voice that we hear to-day, and no uncertain word does it utter. The Sunday after the Ascension, when we might easily dwell upon our Lord's blessing His disciples and being carried up to heaven—the Sunday before Pentecost, when we should study how to prepare for the coming of the Holy Spirit—and yet St. Peter breaks in: "Before all things have a constant, mutual charity."

Yes, my dear brethren, if we want to follow our Saviour to heaven, if we want to prepare our hearts for the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, we cannot do better than cultivate a constant, mutual charity. Notice the stress St. Peter lays on these words. He says: "The end of all is at hand. Be prudent, therefore, and watch in prayers. But before all things

have a constant, mutual charity, for charity covereth a multitude of sins." (1 Pet. iv. 7, 8.) He says this to good people, who have received the grace of God, "who are the good stewards of the manifold grace of God." (*Ibid.*, 10.) We need not, therefore, think that we are above learning the lesson, and that his words are only intended for careless, negligent people, and not for those who treasure the grace of God and try to preserve it by prayers, Mass, and the prudent observance of the Commandments.

The truth is that the last thing good people usually learn is to have "a constant, mutual charity." Yet we should have it "before all things." It is the want of charitableness that makes virtue even so unlovely. The world dislikes the good man, thinking that piety must go hand-in-hand with narrow-mindedness, fault-finding, hardness, readiness to believe the worst. And the world is not far wrong in very many cases; for these are the faults, that are the last to be given up by good people.

Whereas good people should be full of sympathy, affection, and benevolence. Above all things have charity. Charity "thinketh no evil." (1 Cor. xiii. 5.) So when you hear unkind things said, do not believe them; do not be ready to think evil. When you see things which may even scandalize you, do not be ready to be vexed. Look at the other side. Everything has two sides to it. Try to be fair-minded; and if you cannot find an excuse for it, leave it to God. It is not your business. You are only a poor sinner, hoping to be forgiven, as you forgive. And, lastly, do not repeat any unkind thing, true or false. Let it drop. It is only a foul thing, so why should you pass it from hand to hand as if it were something precious?

None of us, perhaps, are altogether uncharitable; but that is not sufficient. St. Peter bids us have "a constant, mutual charity." Those two qualities make the difficulty.

"Constant" means that charity must not be just a whim or a liking, or only when we are in the humour. We hear it said sometimes as the greatest praise: "That man is liked by everybody—he is always the same." The same: yes, constant. What an amiable trait in one's character! How much good must it effect through life!

Anyone who is a brother, who needs a kind thought, word, or action, is the fitting object of our mutual charity. How frequently is charity narrowly limited just to those we like! Others jar upon us. Whatever they may say or do irritates us. We are quick to find fault, to slight, to show resentment to such as these. If our charity is such, it is merely a natural feeling, and not a virtue at all. It may have its reward in this world, but will never raise our souls to heaven.

Now, it is not an easy or a common thing, my dear brethren, to possess this constant, mutual charity, or St. Peter would not have had to lay such emphasis upon it. "Above all things," he says, "have a constant, mutual charity."

We have, then, to cultivate it. Ground requires to be broken up and prepared to cultivate it, and so with our hearts, if they are hard, and soured, and embittered. It is a real work to do it, and a work that must be done. We must be charitable, for we have "a multitude of sins" to be covered.

When we reflect, in being charitable, Who it is that we are imitating, there should be no unwillingness nor hesitation in our hearts. We are asked to be like

Christ. "Learn of Me, for I am meek and humble of heart." (Matt. xi. 29.) And are we annoyed and hurt? "You know not of what spirit you are." (Luke ix. 55.) If we feel annoyance, let us be humble. Our souls are in peril, for all our good qualities will be of no avail if we "have not charity." (1 Cor. viii. 1.)

Learn, then, the lessons. First, "Forgive, and you shall be forgiven." (Luke vi. 37.) Be grateful to God if you have the grace to be the first to give way, to speak, to apologize. That is your honour and glory. You have proved thereby that you are a follower of Christ, Who said on the cross, "Father, forgive them." (Luke xxiii. 34.) The devil may say, "Oh no; stand on your rights: have a proper pride and spirit." Yes, let your pride and haughtiness ruin you, as it did him, who is tempting you.

Secondly, practise speaking kindly. "A mild answer breaketh wrath." (Prov. xv. 1.) How often human nature launches out with a sneer, an angry word, a bitter retort! It has gone. We cannot recall it. Alas! the pity of it. How many sins and crimes have been committed in this world by those who were goaded on by unkind, unjust, and rankling words!

The third and last lesson for cultivating charity is to do kind things. The very doing them sweetens your own heart, gladdens it, sanctifies it. The Master, Who bade us learn of Him, "went about doing good." (Acts x. 38.) How many to whom He had been kind, upon whom He had worked miracles, were faithless and untrue to Him; how many sinned and sinned against Him, but He faltered not in doing good! And so must we do. Look not for gratitude and many words of thanks. Look at the honour of imitating Christ our Lord.

The reward will come hereafter. And you remember in the Gospel, when the King shall say, "Come, ye blessed, of My Father; possess the kingdom prepared for you." (Matt. xxv. 34.) The reward is all for acts of kindness. "When I was hungry you gave Me to eat"—thirsty, a stranger, sick, and in prison, you were kind to Me.

With that reward and blessing before you, be determined "before all things to have a constant, mutual charity," proved by daily action, forgiveness, kind words, and deeds of mercy and of love.

Pentecost

THE HOLY GHOST AND THE BIRTH OF THE CHURCH

"You shall receive the power of the Holy Ghost, . . . and you shall be witnesses unto Me, . . . even to the uttermost part of the earth."—Acts i. 8.

1. The promise and its fulfilment.
2. The effects of the coming of the Holy Spirit: all knowledge of the faith, courage and strength, gift of tongues and miracles.
3. That the Church was commissioned to be the guardian of all truth, to preach to all nations, to prevail over all enemies —time, world, devil.
4. Yet men dare say the Church has failed.

This the promise of our Blessed Lord and His final words, before ascending to His heavenly kingdom. To-day, the birthday of the Church, we see their accomplishment in the descent of the Holy Ghost.

Behold the effects of that coming of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles. The poor, timid band of disciples were awaiting in prayer the fulfilment of their Saviour's promise. And suddenly "they were all filled with the Holy Ghost." (Acts ii. 4.) In one moment the word of the Lord was accomplished. The effects were:

First, the knowledge of all truth and the remembrance of all that Christ had said to them. "When

He, the Spirit of Truth, is come, He will teach you all truth." (John xvi. 13.) And, again: "The Holy Ghost will teach you all things, and bring all things to your mind, whatsoever I shall have said to you." (John xiv. 26.) What a transformation in their souls! Those who had been foolish and slow of heart to believe and understand the tidings of the Resurrection, to recall the words of their Master and see their fulfilment, now, had all the faith of Christ implanted in their hearts. They remembered His words and understood them; they knew the Scriptures and explained them, as we see from St. Peter that day, and applied them to the Messias. (Acts ii. 14-40.) Their knowledge was supernatural and complete.

The second effect was courage and strength. They were all together for fear of the Jews, and as soon as they had received the Holy Spirit they went forth, with Peter at their head. Six weeks ago he had denied His Master, at the taunt of a servant-maid; but now, on the Day of Pentecost, Peter stood up with the eleven, and, lifting up his voice, spoke to the multitude and preached Christ crucified. "They, therefore, that received his word were baptized, and there were added in that day three thousand souls." (Acts ii. 41.)

And the third effect was the power of miracles. They spoke in divers tongues which they had never learned, so that all the crowd, from various lands, heard their own tongue at one time from the lips of one man. And the words of our Lord came true: "In My Name they shall cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues . . . they shall lay their hands upon the sick, and they shall recover." (Mark xvi. 17, 18.) The lame man at the gate of the Temple was the first witness to the miraculous power of Peter.

And how the miracles multiplied may be gathered from the words of the disciples. "Lord, grant unto Thy servants that with all confidence they may speak Thy Word, by stretching forth Thy hand to cures, and signs, and wonders to be done by the Name of Thy holy Son Jesus." (Acts iv. 29, 30.) Again: "They brought forth the sick into the streets, that when Peter came, his shadow at the least might overshadow any of them, and they might be delivered from their infirmities. And there came also a multitude from the neighbouring cities, bringing sick persons and such as were troubled with unclean spirits, who were all healed." (Acts v. 15, 16.) Such were the effects of the descent of the Holy Ghost—all knowledge of the faith, courage, and strength, speaking with power and miracles.

Thus the Church, born on this day of Pentecost, began its career commissioned and empowered, first, to be the guardian of all truth. The truth, given to the Apostles, had to abide in it, for the Spirit of Truth, Who enlightened the Apostles, came to "abide with it for ever." (John xiv. 16.) The Church could lose no truth, could change no truth.

Secondly, to preach to all nations, "You shall be witnesses unto Me . . . even to the uttermost part of the earth." (Acts i. 8). "Go, teach all nations . . . baptizing them . . . teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." (Matt. xxviii. 20.)

Thirdly, commissioned and empowered to prevail over all enemies, time, the world, the devil. The Church grows not old and feeble; time has no power over it. Nations and kingdoms lose vigour and vitality, decay and fall to pieces, but not so the Church

of God. Our Lord had promised another Paraclete, "that He may abide with you for ever." (John xiv. 16.) The world trying, incessantly and in every way all these centuries, to ruin the Church, only sees its efforts abortive, and the Church, in spite of all, thriving and progressing age after age. And why? Because He is with it, Who said: "Behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world." (Matt. xxviii. 20.) And the devil's efforts are futile too, for the promise holds good. "The gates of hell shall not prevail against it." (Matt. xvi. 18.)

And yet men have the assurance and the folly to tell us, ay, and have repeated it for hundreds of years, that this Church so founded, so empowered by the Holy Spirit, has gone wrong, has failed, has perished. The work of the Almighty feeble and decrepid! The work of the Eternal God succumbing to the ravages of time! How can men be so deluded? Have an hundred miserable sects sprung up to teach us this? Watch them, and let their own want of unity, of faith and doctrine, their want of vitality and stability, answer them, and put them to confusion.

But for ourselves, my dear brethren, what glory should be ours on this day of Pentecost to say: "I believe in the Holy Catholic Church." That Church which was founded by Christ, the Son of God, and which is carrying out His commands now as in the first days of the Apostles. That "Credo," "I believe" in the Holy Catholic Church, is resounding this day from every quarter of the globe. Let us thank God that we are children of that Church, which was endowed with all the gifts of the Holy Spirit. That Church, which was girt around and strengthened with the triple bulwark of the promises of Christ, the Son of the

Almighty God. Remember them, and let them strengthen the faith in your hearts this day. Christ promised the Church that the Holy Spirit should "abide with it for ever"; (John xiv. 16). "That the gates of hell shall not prevail against it"; (Matt. xvi. 18), and assured it of His own protecting presence, "I am with you all days even to the consummation of the world." (Matt. xxviii. 20.)

Trinity Sunday

THE POWER OF THE CROSS

"Going, therefore, teach ye all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." —MATT. xxviii. 19.

1. The custom of joining the invocation of the Blessed Trinity and the sign of the cross.
2. The veneration of the cross.
3. Its use in every blessing and Sacrament.
4. The sign of the cross is a power, a sanctifier, a safeguard.

CUSTOM, my dear brethren, from times immemorial, custom, sanctioned and authorized by the Church, has united the names of the Blessed Trinity with the sign of the Holy Cross. The very naming the Blessed Trinity is a profession of faith in the Mystery, the signing ourselves with the cross is an acknowledgment of our Redemption. The revelation of the names of the Trinity, "Father, Son, and Holy Ghost," was made by the Son Himself. The Cross, hitherto a term of reproach, the accursed gibbet, was the instrument by which He redeemed the world, and with which He will come again to judge the world.

The naming and signing—blessing ourselves, as it is commonly called—is an epitome of our religion. One God in three Persons; the Redemption and the Judgment.

In the earliest ages of the Church, those under instruction were taught about the cross before mention was made to them of the Blessed Sacrament. "Being questioned, 'Do you believe in Christ?' He would answer, 'I believe,' and signs himself with the cross of Christ, carries it on his forehead, and is not ashamed of the cross of His Lord." (St. Augustine.)

And with the appearance of the cross in the heavens, followed by the victory of Constantine and the freedom of the Church, came the public honouring and veneration of the cross. The emperor decreed that never again was the cross to be the instrument of death; the cross that had brought life to the souls of men. That he might build a church, in which the cross should be venerated, his mother, St. Helena, though eighty years of age, went to Jerusalem to find it. Her searching was blessed by God, and miracles attested the genuine cross. A portion was left in Jerusalem, and the empress returned with the precious relic, and the Church of the Holy Cross was built by Constantine in Rome.

The Church, in every blessing, in every Sacrament, in every Mass, makes use of the sacred sign of the cross. The Holy Oils used in the administration of the Sacraments are blessed with many signs of the Holy Cross. Holy Water, the Ashes, the Palms all are purified and sanctified by the cross, signed over them many times.

Watch the number of times the Holy Cross is made during the Baptism of a child. Watch, and wonder, and have respect. And when we have confessed our sins, the priest gives us absolution, with the sign of the cross and in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. When you are married, the very ring is sanctified by the cross, and the mutual promise, for whilst your

hands are joined, the cross seals the compact and blesses it. When we are dying, the Holy Oil is given us with the sign of the cross, on our eyes and ears and mouth and hands and feet, that God may pardon the sins we have committed. Over your dead body, at your burial, the cross will claim you as God's own. Your very grave is guarded by the Cross.

But in the Sacrifice of the Mass you will see, in its fulness, the use and veneration of the cross. Mass must be said facing a cross. The altar-stone is marked by the cross, the vestment likewise. The very first words and action are the sign of the cross, and "In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost." The opening passage read from the Missal sanctified by the cross. The Gospel begins with the cross signed on the book, the forehead, mouth, and breast of the priest. And the bread and the chalice after being offered are laid on the altar with a cross. At the Sanctus, "Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord"; how did He come? With the cross, and so it is made again. During the Canon of the Mass, time after time, both before and after the Consecration, as if the words were not sacred enough without it, the cross is signed as they are pronounced. Even with the Blessed Sacrament in his hand, the priest makes the cross over the Precious Blood three times over on two occasions. And the Communion, his own and each of the faithful, is given with the sign of the cross. And the Mass ends with the Blessing.

Let no one dare to think that this is idle repetition. The very sign of the cross is a power, a sanctifier, a safeguard to those, who have the faith and use it reverently. When should I end if I were to tell of the

Saints, who had such faith in the cross that miracles innumerable have attested its power?

The cross is given, too, as a safeguard. "By the sign of the cross, O God, deliver us from our enemies" is the prayer of the Church. It is a safeguard to our soul, as a lightning conductor is to a building. The spite, the machinations of the devil are averted by the cross. Let us be constant in its use. Let us defend ourselves with it, signing our hearts with it, when tempted, and saying with St. Philip Neri: "Lord, let me not prove a traitor to Thee."

The cross is given to us to sanctify us. Make it on awakening, before prayer, on entering a church, and it recalls you to yourself, and you give your heart to God. It dedicates all you do. It sets the seal upon all your actions, words, and sufferings; it shows they are given to God.

And we need not wonder whence its power. From the Redeemer, "because by Thy holy cross Thou hast redeemed the world." It is the standard of our King. How zealous should we be to uphold the honour of the cross of Christ. By our piety, constant use of it, respect for it, let us preach its power and glory to the world. "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

Sunday within the Octave of Corpus Christi

THE LOVE OF OUR LORD IN THE BLESSED SACRAMENT

"I have loved you with an everlasting love."—JER. xxxi. 3.

1. The love of Christ in giving us Himself.
2. Love seeks union.
3. Qualities of love, strength, unselfishness, modesty, and self-effacement.
4. Love and gratitude the return we must make.

CELEBRATING this great festival of Corpus Christi, our minds naturally turn to the love of Christ, in giving us Himself in the Holy Eucharist. By His prophet He says: "I have loved you with an everlasting love." God had planned this mystery of love from all eternity. Of all His wonderful works this is the surpassing achievement. The Blessed Sacrament is the soul, the life, the treasure, of the Church. It is the centre of worship, the food and strength of our souls.

The love of Christ in giving us Himself! All other thoughts are dwarfed by this one—the love of Christ. Even that Divine love could no further go. To awaken gratitude and piety in our hearts, let us study and examine the love that prompted this gift, rather than the gift itself.

Love, if it could, would annihilate time and space,

and thus always be with the one beloved. Even the pagans knew that "the property of friendship is to live with our friend." (Aristotle.) So true is this, that God Himself, when He would prove that He loved us, could do no other thing than this. "The Word was made Flesh, and dwelt among us." (John i. 14.) But as Man our Lord dwells no longer with us. Has, therefore, His love changed, or could not the Almighty fulfil its yearnings? Behold, here in the Blessed Sacrament, the memorial of the love of God. He is here. Love has in reality annihilated time and space, and is living and will live with us "all days, even to the consummation of the world." (Matt. xxviii. 20.)

Take the qualities of love; test them here, and find them supreme. The first quality of love is strength. Even human love makes man generous, brave, persevering to overcome obstacles; pure love raises up human nature, and makes it heroic. Strong and faithful it may be, but it can in time be perverted. Suspicion, reproaches, ingratitude, betrayal—these can ruin love and turn it to hatred.

Not so the strong and faithful love of Jesus Christ. He had this intention and desire of leaving us Himself in the Blessed Sacrament, ever present in His Mind, and no ingratitude could change His loving purpose. His love was strong and faithful, though the Pharisees said He had a devil, and was ambitious to be King; though repeatedly the Jews sought to stone and kill Him; though the rulers resolved to put Him to death, because He did many miracles; though He was not believed in by His own brethren; though, when He declared Himself the living Bread from heaven, many left Him, and His disciples murmured against Him; though they were planning His death the very night

that He instituted this Blessed Sacrament ; though one, whom He had just communicated with His own hands, went forth and betrayed Him ; though another Apostle, that very night, denied Him ; though all the rest deserted Him—in spite of all this, His love was strong and faithful.

Secondly, love is unselfish and disinterested, for real love is "wishing and doing good to another, not for our own, but for his sake." (Aristotle.) This definition needs no application. Why is our Blessed Saviour here present ? For us and for our salvation. Who can doubt the disinterestedness of Jesus Christ, who beholds Him, day after day, the prisoner of love in the tabernacle ? In solitude and in silence, He is waiting to listen to the complaints of the sorrowful, the petitions of the needy, to welcome back the penitent and the prodigal, or to be borne to the death-bed of the sinner, who may have disowned Him, perhaps for years.

And if on His festivals, if at Corpus Christi, He is honoured with ceremonial and sacred rites, adored by earnest crowds, what is that ? What is the best that the whole world can do, to the great Almighty God ? Are there not legions of angels in heaven who worship Him unceasingly ? Yet, such is His love, He chooses to be worshipped by us, that He may reward us for it. His greatest delight is to give us Himself in this Sacrament, yet how unselfish, for why is He delighted ? Because it is our salvation.

The most winning aspect of love, however, is its modesty and self-effacement. True love knows not repeated assurances : it cannot protest. The seat of love is the heart, and not the tongue.

Now, our Blessed Lord in the Gospel scarcely ever refers to His love in leaving us Himself. We find Him

saying that love brought Him on earth, for He came "to seek and to save that which was lost." (Luke xix. 10.) He says He loved us to the end, and when about to die He said: "Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends." (John xv. 13.) And yet to leave us Himself, says St. Thomas, was a mark of still greater love, but He never boasts of this. Moreover, He tells us how His Father loves us, and often what the Holy Ghost would do when He came, but no word about that mysterious attraction, which holy souls feel for His sacred Presence here. The only injunction that He left us was, "Do this for a commemoration of Me." (Luke xxii. 19.) How humbly, briefly said, in memory of Me!

And yet we know of all things He longed for most was to gain our love, our hearts. But He knew that if His very Presence, believed and acknowledged as It is, failed to draw men to Him, that precepts and entreaties would alike be in vain. He left, therefore, His modest, gentle, untiring love to plead for itself, to draw all men to itself.

These thoughts, on the love of our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, should awaken gratitude and piety in our hearts. That is what our Lord is asking for. It is not much. He once said: "If you love those who love you, what reward shall you have? Do not the publicans and heathens this?" (Matt. v. 46.) And yet, He is only asking you to love Him, and surely He hath loved us. Yet there is a reward for us, if we will—life eternal. Yea, and it will take us life eternal to pay Him back love for love; to thank Him and bless Him, for His strong and faithful love, for His unselfish love, for that silent, humble love, which we learned to realize all too late, in the Blessed Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist.

Third Sunday after Pentecost

HOLY MASS

"In every place there is sacrifice, and there is offered to My Name a clean oblation."—MAL. i. 11.

1. Mass the supreme Sacrifice.
2. Bound to hear Mass to show we are God's creatures, to acknowledge our Redeemer, for our own souls' sake.
3. Our joy and privilege to hear Mass. Through it we pay God homage and thanks, through it we pay for the forgiveness and graces we seek.
4. Mass is the Catholic's strength and glory.

THE Holy Eucharist is not only a Sacrament, but also a Sacrifice. And we are bound to believe that the Sacrifice of the New Law is the Holy Mass, which is the Sacrifice of the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, really present on the Altar, under the appearances of bread and wine, and offered to God for the living and the dead.

This is the incomparable Sacrifice—God offering Himself to God. Its value, then, is supreme. "If all the prayers and worship of men and angels, and even Mary's devotion, were offered in one act of praise and adoration, they would not even approach in efficacy the infinite worth of a single Mass. God alone is worthy of God."

And this Holy Mass is given to the Church; priests are ordained to offer It, sinners are welcome to It,

and we are compelled to attend, that we may give glory to God and save our souls. We are bound to hear and attend Mass to show we are God's creatures. For the Mass is not a prayer, a devotion merely, but it is a Sacrifice, and "a Sacrifice is the offering of a Victim by a priest to God alone, in testimony of His being the sovereign Lord of all things." To neglect this Sacrifice is withdrawing our allegiance from Almighty God; is disputing His sovereignty; is setting ourselves up as self-existing, self-sufficient—is a denial that we are God's creatures.

"Moreover, the Holy Mass is one and the same Sacrifice with that of the cross, inasmuch as Christ, Who offered Himself a bleeding Victim on the cross, continues to offer Himself in an unbloody manner on the altar, through the ministration of His priests." Therefore we are bound to hear Mass to acknowledge our Redeemer and to obey His words, "Do this in commemoration of Me." (Luke xxii. 19.) We are bound to hear Mass, that the Redemption may be applied to our souls. Repeated falls into sin necessitate repeated forgiveness. Christ died once, but continues to offer Himself on the altar. And His complaint to so many is: "You will not come to Me, that you may have life." (John v. 40.) It is as great a sin to neglect a Mass of Obligation as it was for the Jews to deride the Crucified Saviour. By staying away and despising Holy Mass, Catholics, who know what it is, wilfully deny their Redeemer. "I have spread forth My hands all the day to an unbelieving people, who walk in a way that is not good, after their own thoughts: a people who continually provoke Me to anger before My face." (Isaias lxv. 2, 3.)

Thirdly, we are bound to come to Mass for our own

souls' sake, to obtain God's mercy and forgiveness. Mass is offered up for our "innumerable sins, and offences, and negligences." To despise the Mass is to reject the means for these sins and shortcomings to be forgiven.

Thus, then, it is imperative on all Catholics, who are not lawfully prevented, to hear Mass on Sundays and festivals of Obligation to show that they are God's creatures, to acknowledge the Redemption of Jesus Christ, to obtain God's mercy and forgiveness. Thus far duty and the law.

But oh! my brethren, do we require to be driven to Holy Mass? Are we denying its efficacy? Have we given ear to those who blaspheme it? Oh no! To a good Catholic, Mass is the joy and glory of his life. "It is the last invention of the Creator's love which converts our fallen world into a true paradise." It would require a Chrysostom or a St. Bernard to tell you of the joys, the fervour, the enthusiasm, that devotion to Holy Mass can kindle in the hearts of men. It will be a wonder—an incomprehensible wonder—for all eternity to the Saints of God how men could be found who were not anxious to attend Holy Mass! Yea, it is a mystery even to the evil spirits how men, Catholics, knowing what the Holy Mass is, could neglect and despise it.

Let us ask God to illuminate our souls to understand and appreciate the Holy Sacrifice, for the best of us think little of it, to what we should. For it is the Sacrifice in which we poor sinners, through Jesus Christ our Lord, can approach the Almighty, Sovereign Lord of all things, not with empty hands, but with that which can pay Him all, and which is the full price of all that we need and pray for. Jesus Christ gives

Himself to us and for us in the Mass. United to Him, we pay the Almighty honour, and glory, and obedience. We render Him thanks—full and complete thanks—for all His mercies and graces. The Father looks down upon us, and is pleased that He has created us, and that His Son redeemed us.

And then, in the Mass, we do not supplicate, as beggars and outcasts, for what we need. We can pay for all we need. We have the priceless treasure of the Blood of Jesus Christ. That Blood was shed for the remission of sin, and that is our first petition—forgiveness. We ask for the remission of sin and of the punishment due to our sins, and that same relief for the souls in Purgatory.

Then we ask for the graces and favours we need, and which our parents, children, or friends, for whom we pray, may need. And the price is there upon the Altar! The price for a thousand worlds' Redemption and all the graces they could want. We obtain little because we ask for little. "Ask and you shall receive, that your joy may be full." (John xvi. 24.)

We cannot always kneel around the Altar, safe near our Lord. We have to go forth and battle with the world, and work for our living, and be distracted, and worried, and annoyed, and tempted. Before you go, get strength from the Holy Mass. The Holy Eucharist is the food and life of our souls. So Sunday's Mass is the time to obtain the graces that we need to battle through the coming week. See where you have previously failed, ask specially for the grace and strength you require. Pray for a good will to put Jesus and His interests first and foremost, for loyalty, fidelity, loving acceptance of the Holy Will of God, for perseverance and a holy death.

To believe in the Mass, to hear It as often as may be, this is a Catholic's privilege and joy. It is our strength and our glory. By the Mass we can honour God, glorify our Redeemer, receive a pledge of the forgiveness of our sins, and be enriched with all the graces and blessings to guard us and guide us safe. "The mercies of the Lord . . . are new every morning : great is Thy faithfulness." (Lam. iii. 22, 23.)

Fourth Sunday after Pentecost

OBEDIENCE TO THE WORD OF GOD

"At Thy word, I will let down the net."—LUKE v. 5.

1. Obedience to the word of God our rule, in spite of human respect and our own judgment.
2. This taught us by the miraculous draught of fish.
3. Christ's command contrary to common sense.
4. But Peter obeyed through faith.
5. Peter's reward.
6. God's dealings with us the same; we, too, must obey.

NOTHING, my dear brethren, is more seldom to be found than a total trust in God—doing everything simply because God wills it and says it. Our own judgment, common sense, human respect, spoil most of our actions. There is no reward for obeying them. It is a difficult lesson to learn—and yet the very foundation of a good Catholic spirit—that it is always the best and the wisest thing to do, to give up our own will, disregard what men may say, and faithfully do what God would have us do.

This lesson is taught us, in the Gospel of the day, in the easiest and most interesting manner—viz., by example.

Jesus was so thronged by the crowds that He borrowed Simon's boat and taught the multitudes from that. This is almost at the beginning of His public

Life. The minds of men were not decided what to think of this new Teacher. Their present state was one of wonder. They watched Him, listened to Him, crowded after Him, curious and eager. The good wondered and believed; the bad wondered and sneered.

Jesus, then, taught the multitude from out the boat, and when He had concluded, He turned to Peter with the words, "Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught."

Now, my dear brethren, were these words according to common sense? That is a question we often ask ourselves when we find God's Will not in accord with our own. The plea of common sense is a frequent excuse for not doing what we should, but, rather, what we want to do. Look, then, what must these fishermen have thought of this command? We can tell from Peter's answer. "We have toiled all the night and caught nothing." The night was the time for their fishing, and not the blazing noonday. They had exerted all their skill, exhausted all their patience—toiling all the night and brought up nothing but weeds and mire. To cast their nets again now is certain disappointment. If the fish had avoided their nets in the darkness of the night, much more will they shun them now, with the Syrian sun glaring from the heavens.

There is more, too, than St. Peter's own judgment concerned. It is a public thing. His brother-fishermen are all around. The crowds gazing curiously from the shore. St. Peter was hurt that his Master had asked him this one thing. He is asked to expose himself to ridicule and failure! He trembled at the thought of drawing up the net, in the face of all—

empty. He fancied he heard already the laughter and the taunts that would greet him.

And what did St. Peter do? Did he shirk it? excuse himself from doing it? Common sense, his own judgment, human respect, were alike all powerless against the simple word, the wish, the command of Christ. We have toiled all the night and taken nothing: our efforts, useless then, now seem to us foolish, nevertheless, "at Thy word I will let down the net."

Oh, blessed example of noble-hearted faith! Oh, may we have the grace in like difficulties to imitate St. Peter! And Catholics in a Protestant country must often meet trials, and find themselves in positions requiring faith and courage to quit themselves like men and obey God. Let our strength be in this "At Thy word." For every command of Christ contains a secret promise—the promise of strength to obey, the promise of a blessing, if we do.

St. Peter cast the net, not in the bare hope of a chance, but in assured trust of success!

"Launch out into the deep," Jesus says to all of us. But what answer do we make? We remain timidly near the shore, afraid to trust ourselves in the depths of the providence of God. We excuse ourselves. We have prayed and got no answer—prayed again, the deep yields no supply. We hope against hope, and cast the net for the last time, and it comes up empty. Jesus now comes and says: "Let down the net." It is not our last time, but the time after the last; but it is God's time. We have not to lay down the time and the manner to God, to hear our prayers and help us in our needs. At His word, we must let down the net. We cast in faith, and we obtain in abundance.

For behold St. Peter's reward. He had done, not what he thought was sense, not what men would have counselled him to do, but what Christ would have him do. And with one cast of the net they filled both ships, so that they began to sink. "And St. Peter was astonished and all that were with him at the draught of the fishes which they had taken." All night they had toiled for nothing, but this one draught more than recompensed all their labour.

It is the Lord's constant way to keep us waiting long, and then to answer speedily at the end; to let many hours seem quite unproductive, and then at once to grant more than enough to repay the labour of all.

Faith in Christ never disappoints. All else does: especially trusting to ourselves and trying to please men.

And what did St. Peter do? He fell at Jesus's knees, and cried: "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." Not that he would have Christ go, for he forthwith forsook all things and followed Him. But his humility confessed that He was unworthy of God's mercies. He obeyed once against the promptings of self-judgment and human respect—at Christ's word he let down the net, and see the reward of that one act of obedience. He forsook all, followed Christ, became an Apostle and the Prince of the Apostles.

So we, too, if we overcome ourselves generously and obey God, and the voice of His Holy Church, we shall find it easy afterwards to follow Him faithfully, for obstacles and difficulties will miraculously disappear at the word of the Master.

Learn from St. Peter, then, to have a total trust in God, and to be brave enough, in spite of all, simply to do His blessed Will.

Fifth Sunday after Pentecost

THE MARKS OF THE CHURCH: THE CHURCH IS ONE

"There shall be one fold and one Shepherd."—JOHN x. 16.

1. The marks of the Church: one, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic.
2. The unity or oneness must be real, visible, and perpetual.
3. Real in faith, government, and worship.
4. Visible, or thwarts the object of the Church's existence.
5. Perpetual, precluding lapses, errors, and therefore any need of reformation.
6. By living up to the faith, we can help to make the Church recognised.

THE Church, that our Blessed Lord came to found on earth, to be of use to the souls of men, must possess such features or marks that men can recognise it. And as there are so many various religions, it is all the more imperative that these marks should easily be noted, and found only in one Church, the original one that Christ founded.

These marks, as you know, are four. The Church is one, is holy, is Catholic and Apostolic. We are bound to know and understand these things, and the knowledge of them braces us up to the practice of our holy religion.

The Unity or oneness of the Church, to take the first characteristic to-day, must be a real, visible, and perpetual unity.

The world, and many religions likewise, talks of broad-

mindedness, comprehensiveness, that every man should be free to pick and choose, and take or leave what he likes, as to spiritual doctrines and the service of God. But the Church of Christ insists on real unity in Faith, in Government, in Worship.

In Faith there must be the same Creeds—the Apostles', the Nicene, and the Athanasian. And each must be believed in the same manner, explained completely and definitely in the same meaning. Test the unity of belief of any sect or church you wish, with some such subject as the communion of saints, or the forgiveness of sins, phrases they glibly use. Test their unity of belief! There would arise such a storm of controversy, and a thousand and one opinions, that it would make us realize, in comparison, what is Catholic Unity. About "forgiveness of sins," for example, there is not one divergent thought in the minds of a hundred thousand good Catholics.

In Government, too, there must be real unity. All the figures of the Church, a kingdom, an army, a city a fold imply a government, a ruler, a leader, a shepherd. Why are there ministers in any church except to teach and preserve unity? Otherwise each minister would be a revolutionist, raising the flag of rebellion and leading the people his own way. And if there are ministers to preserve order and unity, why not bishops or overseers, as the name signifies, to watch over the ministers; and if bishops, why not one chief Bishop, the Pope, the Father of the faithful, the Vicar of Jesus Christ, to be in supreme charge of the Government? A ship must have a captain whom all obey, an army a general, a government a premier. Is the Church of Christ, then, alone to be left without a head, a ruler, one whom all must acknowledge and obey?

Real Unity in Faith, in Government, and in Worship. By worship let us understand the outward and solemn service of God. The guardians of this unity are the ritual, the ceremonies, the rubrics or regulations, yea, the very language in which the Sacraments are administered and the Mass said. Latin is used, a dead language, which means not a spoken, commonly-used language, varying in different centuries, which in the course of time might alter so much that changes and errors could creep in, perhaps unperceived.

And this real unity must, secondly, be visible. A mark by which a thing is known must be visible, or how could the thing be recognised? This seems so self-evident that one can scarcely believe that it has been an argument for ages that the Church of Christ existed in its purity so long—that length of time is very much debated—and then it became submerged, and appeared again in radiance at the Reformation! And what became of the souls of men during those centuries in which the Church was lost to view, whether it was wandering in the desert like the Israelites, or pursuing its course as a subterranean river? To do its work—that is, to save souls—the Church must always be visible to the souls that seek her in earnestness and truth. That was the object of its Divine Founder; it had to be the light of the world, and no varying or uncertain light, to enlighten the souls of men. And if men say that its light was quenched, that it could not be discerned, are they not blaspheming that Almighty, Who could create the sun in the heavens, and the moon, the faithful witness, and yet failed, as they say, when He created His Church!

The Unity of the Church has to be a real, visible, and perpetual Unity. How could it be one if it were

not always the selfsame one ? So the perpetual unity of the Church precludes and makes impossible a fall, a lapse, a vital error in that Church. A repentant Church, a reformed Church has not had perpetual unity.

No, the Church of Christ, as it was founded, so it has gone and will go on unto the end, really the same one Church, visibly the same Church, perpetually the same Church.

And we have had the blessed faith given to us to belong to this, the Church of Jesus Christ. We can do honour to our Divine Master by being zealous subjects of the Church. By being men, who take a pride in knowing their duties and standing firmly by them—men, who know their faith, and can give an account of it, men, who obey and honour the government of their Church, and by that obedience and respect strengthen their Church, and make others notice and reverence it. By being men, again, who love their holy Worship, to whom every detail, ceremony, and word is something sacred. Blessed are such men, they are the servants of the Most High ! To them He has committed the honour of His Church. By their good lives they make it visible as the one true Church of Christ. And generations of such men, handing the faith down from father to son, as the one treasure they possess, each in their day, make the unity of God's Church perpetual.

What a picture ! Good Catholics, kneeling in many a Church to-day, attending Mass, saying their Rosary, are linked, by their faith and hope and love, to relatives and friends long gone before them. We, their children's children, are working now for that glorious crown, which our forefathers have long ago received for fidelity to the one true Church.

Sixth Sunday after Pentecost

THE HOLINESS OF THE CHURCH

"A glorious Church, . . . holy and without blemish."—Eph. v. 27.

1. Holiness derived from its Founder.
2. His object in founding the Church: to endow it with holiness, that it might make men holy.
3. Objection: men redeemed once, what more needed?
4. The Church has to apply the means of holiness—the Sacraments—to the souls of men, *toties quoties.*
5. Objection: Church holy? Look at bad Catholics. Argument false. Its holiness vindicated by the lives of good people.

The second mark of the Church of Christ is its Holiness. And this character it has derived from its Founder; has perpetuated by the means of being holy, with which He endowed it; and this mark is its glory, witnessed to and proved by the sanctity of the lives of so many, who have been steadfast to its faith and doctrine.

The Founder of the Church is none other than God made man, Christ Jesus our Lord. He, before Whom the four living creatures, resting not day or night, exclaim: "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty." (Apoc. iv. 8.) He is the Founder of the Church, and His merciful object in founding it was to make it holy, and endow it with the means of making the souls of men holy, sanctifying and saving them.

Yes, men say, He did that when He redeemed us, and blotted out the handwriting against us. What need, then, of the Church ?

The mission and work of the Church is to apply the effects of the Redemption to the souls of men. If this continued application were not necessary, why did its Divine Founder not only redeem by His Death, but perpetuate His Redemption, by instituting the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass ? And saying, " Do this in commemoration of Me," did He not bequeath it to the Church as the great means of holiness ?

Yes, my dear brethren, in our Church, the home of our souls, there is every means and requisite to make us holy, and their efficacy is derived from the Precious Blood of Christ. These means are the Sacraments of the Church.

The little child is brought to the font ; the waters of Baptism wash away original sin, and at once it is a child of God, signed and sealed heir to the Kingdom of God. It is made holy. Later on the stripling and the maiden are anointed with chrism in Confirmation to strengthen them and keep them holy. And through life, how many times—seven times, or " seventy times seven times " ? (Matt. xviii. 22) as our Lord said, does the poor sinner, who has fallen, come to the Sacrament of Penance ? He is there forgiven, his soul is cleansed by the power of the Precious Blood, he is made holy once again.

And, day by day, the Holy Mass is offered up, the bread and wine changed into the Body and Blood of Christ. This is the holiest doctrine and the holiest practice in the Church of God. What sanctified the souls of men ? The sacrifice of the cross. What continues, then, to sanctify them but that same

Sacrifice, the Holy Mass, which, as the Catechism teaches us, "is one and the same Sacrifice as that of the cross, inasmuch as Christ, Who offered Himself, a bleeding victim, on the cross to His Heavenly Father, continues to offer Himself in an unbloody manner on the Altar through the ministry of priests." And at the Mass, the faithful can communicate, can purify and fortify their souls, by receiving the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. This is "the memorial of His wonderful works," (Ps. cx. 4), the Almighty's highest effort to make us holy.

This, then, is the work of holy Church. Who are we to talk of being redeemed once? Are we so innocent and holy throughout life? Do we never fall into sin? Have we never been unfaithful to God? "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." (1 John i. 8.) So the work of the Church is to watch over us, care for us, cleanse and nourish our souls, as a mother does her child. Our holy Mother the Church we call her. We understand about our bodies, that they must be fed and clothed, and diseases checked and weaknesses strengthened, not once, but continually all through life. But our soul! Oh, it was redeemed once, what matter how foul a life we have led since, no matter the vile habits we have fallen into, no matter the burden of grave and awful sins dragging us to destruction!

The Church would have failed in its holy mission, if it allowed its children to live like this. To make us holy is its work. It has every means necessary from the hand of God, its Founder, and as long as the world shall last, it will be found ministering to the souls of men.

The Church holy! yes, in its Founder, and in the

means of holiness bestowed upon it. But look around, see the number of careless, indifferent, even bad Catholics, and how can one say the Church is holy? By its children let it be known.

My dear brethren, do not be misled by talk like this. Yes, there are bad Catholics, and they are bad, just because they neglect the means of holiness so kindly offered them by the Church. It is not the Church that has made them bad, but their own wilful disobedience to the Church, neglecting the holy Sacraments, despising the Presence of their Lord upon the Altar that has made them what they are. But even for them there is holiness in the Church, if they will return to it repentant prodigals.

But their bad example is far more than atoned for by the holy lives of the subjects of the Church, who in all ages and in all lands have been devout, obedient, and loyal to the Faith. Even now, how many throughout the world are leading careful, faithful lives, using the means of holiness afforded them by the Church. And it is not a weary, lonely life that they are leading. They are working before the eye of God. They know that He reads their hearts, and sees their patience, and their love, and their pure intention, doing all for Him. To the world they seem the same as others; before Heaven they are the holy ones of God. And their hope and courage are buoyed up by looking at the example of the Saints who have gone before them. The Saints, the heroic men and women, who have been witnesses, in every age and in every country, to the holiness of the Church, whose children they were. And if their lives reflect the holiness of the Church and give glory to it; remember to each one of us the same Church offers the same means of holiness. To use those

means and become holy, or to neglect those means and be lost, depends upon ourselves. We have free will, we can choose for ourselves.

Prayer, after the Sacraments, is the great means of holiness. Let us pray, then, pray daily, pray earnestly for a good will to use all these means with such diligence and perseverance that we may become holy children of the Church, that "glorious Church . . . holy and without blemish."

Seventh Sunday after Pentecost

THE CHURCH CATHOLIC AND APOSTOLIC

"Go ye into the whole world and preach the Gospel to every creature."—MARK xvi. 15.

1. Catholicity an unmistakable mark.
2. The Apostles set out, by the end of the days of persecution, how Catholic, universal, was the Church.
3. Preaching the Gospel, before the New Testament was written, depended on tradition.
4. Clinging to tradition, the Church finds itself Apostolic.
5. The necessity of holding fast.

No better known word exists, my dear brethren, than "Catholic." The spelling may vary a little, but its sound and look are unmistakable in many languages. Like the word itself, so the Church, that bears that name, is unmistakable. It is universal, as the word Catholic signifies, it is found everywhere, it has worked its way throughout the whole world. Imitations there are and there have been, but they deceive none except those, who are willing to be deceived. The genuine Catholic Church is recognised by the whole world. Its enemies even, however bitterly they may hate it, certainly cannot ignore it.

From the lips of its Divine Founder the Church received the commission to be Catholic. "Go ye into the whole world and preach the Gospel to every creature." And it has been faithful to that commission

ever since. It is marvellous to follow the journeyings of the Apostles. Filled with the Holy Spirit, they hastened to carry the good tidings throughout the world. "Their sound hath gone forth into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world." (Ps. xviii. 5.) The men, who cowered together for fear of the Jews, when filled with the Holy Spirit and commissioned to preach, traversed the known world of those days, founded sees in every country, and laid down their lives in various lands.

And their successors followed on and ruled the world from the Catacombs. Ten persecutions raged against the Church, and yet within fourteen years from the last persecution, when the Emperor Constantine had given liberty to the Church, in the year 325, how many Bishops could assemble at the First General Council? Three hundred and eighteen. How amazed the world must have been! This the Religion that had been stamped out? The Council was convened at Nice in Bithynia, and see what a Catholic assemblage of Prelates met there. Pope Sylvester sent representatives from Rome, Bishop Hosius of Cordova in Spain presided, Cæcilian came from Carthage, in Africa, from Gaul the Bishop of Dijon, Antioch and Asia Minor and Italy sent many, and from Alexandria in Egypt came Bishop Alexander and with him the greatest of them all, the young Athanasius. Thus the three hundred and eighteen Bishops, from all parts of the world, gathered together to proclaim their Founder Divine, and to prove that His Church was Catholic.

It is a long, long look back, through the vista of ages from 1900 to the First General Council, A.D. 325. But throughout those ages the Church has been ever spreading, making itself Catholic and more Catholic as

time went on. True there have been storms and hurricanes that have tried it, but, like some noble tree, a giant of the forest, though branches have been torn from its trunk, it is still alive, the same old tree, flourishing and throwing out new branches, and its roots spreading, claiming fresh ground each year. And in our own day, there are Bishops in communion with Rome, and holding their powers from the Pope, in every land upon which God's sun shines down. And under these bishops, priests, and all these priests believing the same truth, preaching the same doctrine, saying the same Mass, administering the same Sacraments. Catholic in every way is the holy Church of Christ.

"Go ye into the whole world and preach the Gospel to every creature." They to whom these words were spoken were the Apostles, and they were told to preach the Gospel. My dear brethren, the Gospels had not been written then. What they had to preach was not the written Gospel, but the good tidings of the Redemption of Christ. And how had they this knowledge? From the Holy Ghost, of whom Christ had said, "He will teach you all truth" (John xvi. 13), and "He will teach you all things, and bring all things to your mind whatsoever I shall have said to you." (John xiv. 26.) And when the Apostles added fresh preachers to themselves, as Barnabas and Timothy and others, these learned the word from the Apostles, and so began Tradition. Tradition, the handing down the teaching of Christ by word of mouth, by teaching and preaching. Clinging to this tradition makes the Church Apostolic. What other Church, save the one, can claim this privilege, this mark of authenticity? We can trace back the history and origin of every sect and church, and their antiquity is

wanting, for we find their author long subsequent to the time of the Apostles. And we find their author is a man, and not the Divine Founder of the Catholic Church, Jesus Christ our Lord.

So we children of the true Church see the importance of holding fast to the teaching and the traditions of the Apostles. What does St. Paul say? "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach a Gospel to you besides that which we have preached to you, let him be anathema." (Gal. i. 8.) And see him, as St. Luke tells us, "confirming the Churches, commanding them to keep the precepts of the Apostles and the ancients." (Acts xv. 41.) From the beginning there have been proud and self-sufficient men who have started doctrines and ideas of their own. They did not escape St. Paul's notice; he says, "There are some who trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ." (Gal. i. 7.) But their errors have never prevailed except locally and for a time.

In these days of indifference, when one is called a bigot, unless he admits that one Church is as good as another, when believing what one likes, and nothing hard and fast, is mistaken for charity and large-mindedness, we cannot be too strict in holding fast in every point to the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. "Therefore, Brethren, stand fast; and hold the traditions which you have learned." (2 Thess. ii. 14.) Let us rally to these strong and stirring words of St. Paul. Pray for earnest faith. Be on your guard against vain words and insidious sneers. Reverence every tradition and teaching of the Church. Remember that by your life you can honour or dishonour the Divine Founder of the Catholic and Apostolic Church.

Eighth Sunday after Pentecost

ENEMIES OF THE CHURCH: THE WORLD

"Whosoever will be a friend of the world becometh an enemy of God."—Jas. iv. 4.

1. The world, what it is, why an enemy of the Church.
2. Its mode of warfare: open, by calumny and ridicule; secret, seducing the soul.
3. Example of the worldling.
4. To guard against the world we must watch our hearts, and remember "it passeth away."

It is but natural and to be expected that the Church of Christ should have its enemies. Its message and its purpose are so entirely opposite to the ways and inclinations of human nature, that it is no wonder that the world, the flesh, and the devil have coalesced to thwart its work.

By the world we understand the duties, pursuits, and pleasures of everyday life. These things may not in themselves be wicked, but they become an enemy, if allowed to limit the horizon of our vision to this short life alone, if allowed to engross our souls, to become our end, our all in all. Yes, worldly details, not wrong in themselves, become wrong, if they stand between God and our soul, and unutterably wrong, if they usurp God's place in our hearts. And this is their tendency. "Know you not that the friendship of this world is the enemy of God?" (Jas. iv. 4.)

And we ourselves are naturally inclined to fall in with the ways of the world. We are in the world, so the danger is constant and ever with us. Most men are carried along on the tide of worldly ways, pursuits, and pleasures, and we shall be swept away too, unless we battle strenuously against the stream.

The methods of the warfare of the world against the Church are twofold—open and secret. The open warfare is usually carried on by calumny or ridicule. The days of persecution are passed, we may hope, but the world hates the Church as bitterly as ever, and its aim is to discredit the Church. The holiness, the calm, the success of the Church irritate the world. And the Pharisees are alive yet, and say to the Church what they said to its Master, "Thou hast a devil." If our Lord could be thus blasphemed, can we wonder at the Holy Mass being styled idolatrous superstition, at the vile slanders against the practice of confession, at insults against Mary the Immaculate, the authority of the Pope, at the sneers against the priest, and the blameless nun, passing from the convent to the School? Our Lord has said: "If the world hate you, know ye that it hath hated Me before you . . . because you are not of the world, therefore the world hateth you." (John xv. 18, 19.)

Most of us can stand an attack, and opposition often makes us more earnest in our religion, but few of us are strong enough to face and persevere against ridicule. And the world uses this weapon with dexterity and skill. Human respect is a tender and touchy thing, and sneers and cheap, coarse wit from a companion have made many a poor Catholic ashamed of the practices of his holy religion, and then abandon them one by one. The sign of the Cross is ridiculed

at the dinner-hour, and the weak Catholic gives it up; then grace is soon forgotten too. Then Friday comes, and abstinence is given up for fear of a laugh. Then the priest passes by, and the Catholic, regarding those around, omits the salute he would gladly have made, and is despised by them all as a coward. And if there is talk about religion he temporizes, is afraid to speak out, and perhaps ends by agreeing that one religion is as good as another.

Then there is the secret and insidious warfare against the souls of the children of the Church. Worldliness, or the spirit of the world, ingratiates itself into the heart, that once was all for Jesus. It takes the form of some pleasure, companion, pursuit, and at first the soul suspects nothing wrong. The danger is in being seduced and engrossed by it. We learn to forget to have a pure intention and to do all for God, and by degrees it is the world that becomes the master. Too much time, too much pleasure is given, to this or that, and God's service suffers, prayers are curtailed, good customs die out, and God is forgotten.

One example of the worldling stands out prominently in the Gospels. (Matt. xix. 20 and Luke xviii. 21.) It is an example that should make each one of us humble and fearful. He was a good young man, eager to learn of our Blessed Lord, and able to answer what so few of us could do—that he had kept all the commandments from his youth. And yet there was something! Our Blessed Lord did not win him over. He, Who could command the storm and unclean spirits, failed to convert this good young man. Jesus said to him: "Yet one thing is wanting to thee: sell all whatever thou hast and give to the poor, and then thou shalt have treasure in heaven, and come, follow Me." "He

having heard these things, became sorrowful; for he was very rich." And St. Matthew adds, "He went away sad." The world gained the victory. His wealth stood between him and God; alas! perhaps afterwards it might usurp God's place in his heart. Worldliness fascinates and enthrals the soul. He had no idea that he was so completely in the hands of the enemy; but the world was his master.

May God give each one of us the grace to see what is ruling in our heart. The day will come when our Lord will demand of us a sacrifice. "Yet one thing is wanting to thee," He will say. May we be able to say, with St. Peter: "Lord, we have left all things, and have followed Thee." (Matt. xix. 27.)

"Love not the world, nor the things which are in the world." (1 John ii. 15.) Two things we must do to keep this word, lest our hearts get entangled and ensnared. First, we must keep a watch over our hearts. If we find we are growing slothful and careless in the service of God, let us examine what it may be that is usurping God's place. Whatever it may be, it cannot be allowed to be master.

And, secondly, to help us to avoid entanglement, let us remember "the world passeth away." (1 John ii. 17.) How can any transient pleasure, honour, or gain satisfy an immortal soul? "What doth it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his own soul?" (Matt. xvi. 26.) "The world passeth away . . . but he that doth the will of God, abideth for ever." (1 John ii. 17.)

Remember that, and give yourselves to God. Range yourselves on His side, soldiers of Christ, children of the Church. The enemies of the Church must perforce be our enemies, and we will hold no parley with them.

Fear the plausibility and deceits of worldliness. Resist the beginnings of a worldly spirit, and do not judge for yourself, but obey the Church and the maxims of Holy Writ. "Religion, clean and undefiled before God and the Father, is this . . . to keep one's self unspotted from the world." (Jas. i. 27.)

Ninth Sunday after Pentecost

THE ENEMIES OF THE CHURCH: THE FLESH

"For he that soweth in his flesh, of his flesh also shall reap corruption."—GAL. vi. 8.

1. The flesh, the second enemy; the struggle inevitable.
2. Reasons for fearing this class of sin. The terrible judgments incurred by it—*e.g.*, the Deluge, Sodom. The difficulty of being rescued—*e.g.*, Lot.
3. Fear, flight, avoidance, our safeguards.

THE second great enemy of the Church and the children of the Church is the Flesh—that is, our own human nature, with its passions and concupiscences. "For all that is in the world is the concupiscence of the flesh, the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life." (1 John ii. 16.) And St. Paul warns us: "For the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh; for these are contrary one to another; so that you do not the things that you would." (Gal. v. 17.)

How, then, can we best learn not to walk according to the flesh? All have to face this struggle at some time or other in their lives, and most of the poor souls, who are lost for ever, have been ruined by the sins of the flesh. "For if you live according to the flesh, you shall die." (Rom. viii. 13.)

Fear of these sins of the flesh is the best defence

against them. Some temptations we have to face and fight against; others—and these are specially the ones, it is most prudent to fear, to avoid and flee from them.

If we look into the Sacred Scriptures, we shall find two great reasons to fear these sins. First, the dreadful punishments they provoke Almighty God to inflict; and, secondly, the difficulty—the almost impossibility—of being rescued from their thralls.

Early in the history of the human race we read: "And God, seeing that the wickedness of men was great on the earth, and that all the thought of their heart was bent upon evil at all times, it repented Him that He had made man on the earth. And being touched inwardly with sorrow of heart, He said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth. . . . And the earth was corrupted before God, and was filled with iniquity, for all flesh had corrupted its way upon the earth." (Gen. vi. 5-12.) Sins of the flesh, then, you see, brought the Deluge upon the earth. The same passions and lust that led these sons of God, as they are called, astray are in our nature too, "for the imagination and thoughts of man's heart are prone to evil from his youth." (Gen. viii. 21.)

And, later on, we find another example. God had pledged Himself not to destroy every living creature as He had done, but in His wrath He singled out cities, and this time it was not water, but fire, that was the avenger. "And the Lord rained upon Sodom and Gomorrha brimstone and fire out of heaven. And He destroyed their cities, and all the country about; all the inhabitants of the cities, and all things that spring from the earth." (Gen. xix. 24, 25.) And why

was this? We are told "Their sin is become exceedingly grievous." (*Ibid.*, xviii. 20.) "The men of Sodom were very wicked, and sinners before the face of the Lord beyond measure." (*Ibid.*, xiii. 13.)

These punishments fill us with awe, but perhaps, thinking we are not so wicked as to deserve such chastisement, they might fail to make us give up occasions and attachments, that might lead us into sin.

Then, perhaps, the second reason, for dreading this class of deadly sins, may fill us with God's holy fear. It is the difficulty, almost the impossibility, of being rescued from its entanglements. Let us take the example of Lot. Perhaps none of us deserve this praise which St. Peter gives to him: "For in sight and hearing he was just, dwelling among them, who from day to day vexed the just soul with unjust works." (2 Pet. ii. 8.) Yet look at the difficulty of the escape of this just man from his evil surroundings, from the filth of Sodom. Moved by Abraham's prayers, two angels of the Lord were sent to rescue Lot from the doomed city of Sodom, because the Lord spared him. And what a rescue it was! He was reluctant to go; he lingered; the angels had to take him by the hand, and the hand of his wife, and of his daughters. He believed them when they said: "We will destroy this place, because their cry has grown loud before the Lord, Who hath sent us to destroy them." (Gen. xix. 13.) And yet he was reluctant to leave his home; he had friends; the city was pleasant; the land round about was like the paradise of the Lord, says the Scripture. All this decked out the evils of the city, enthralled poor Lot and his wife and daughters, and they were loth to depart. He lingered. The angels brought him forth, and set him without the city, saying, "Save

thy life : look not back . . . lest thou also be consumed. . . . Make haste and be saved." (*Ibid.*) Is not this a terrible escape ? And was it an escape ? Not for all. "Look not back," the angels had said. Was she saying good-bye for ever to her home ? How pleasant the days had been—the pity of it ! And the poor, foolish woman regretfully looked back ! "And his wife, looking behind her, was turned into a statue of salt." From the contamination of the wicked "the just man shall scarcely be saved." (1 Pet. iv. 18.) Even Lot lingers and hesitates, and with difficulty advances. His wife looked back, and our Lord bids us "Remember Lot's wife." (Luke xvii. 32.)

Every one of us, my dear brethren, must flee from sin to be saved. We must be afraid, lest we be contaminated. We cannot take things easily, enjoy ourselves, keep no curb upon ourselves without falling away, allured by our desires. There is always the danger, and if we grow careless and lose holy fear, "we may again be entangled and overcome." (2 Pet. ii. 20.) Entangled, says St. Peter ; there is the danger. "Be not without fear about sin forgiven" (Ecclus. v. 5), for the sins of the flesh entangle the soul. If we are easy-going and slothful, how do we know that we are not entangled ? The bird only knows that it is snared, when it tries to be free. When we are face to face with peril, when we are failing in the struggle, when we are almost yielding, please God, the intercession of the Saints, as that of Abraham, may shield us ; may our Angel Guardian take us by the hand ! For then we shall all be like Lot, or Lot's wife. Very nearly lost, but not quite ;—or, alas ! very nearly saved, but not quite !

Tenth Sunday after Pentecost

THE ENEMIES OF THE CHURCH: THE DEVIL

"Satan hath desired to have you."—Luke xxii. 31.

1. The arch-enemy, the devil; mistake to undervalue an enemy.
2. The depth of his malice, and why.
3. His craft.
4. His powers.
5. He even makes men his tools: they who scandalize, bad talk, bad books, bad parents.
6. Necessary to be on our guard.

The arch-enemy of the Church and of the souls of men, my dear brethren, is the devil. He is the instigator, whereby the world is full of wickedness and turns against God; he is the seducer of the human race, the cause of that fall, the result of which is the flesh lusteth against the spirit.

The greatest mistake in warfare is to undervalue, to hold your enemy too cheaply. To have any chance of escaping the wiles of the devil we must study and realize the depth of his malice, his craft, his powers, and how he even manages to make men do his work for him. In the struggle for heaven leave nothing to chance; study your enemy, watch his stratagems, calculate his strength, and plan how to avoid defeat. "Your adversary the devil goeth about seeking whom

he may devour, whom resist ye, strong in faith." (1 Pet. v. 8.)

Why should the devil hate us, and seek to ruin our souls? Out of hatred and spite to Jesus Christ our Lord. The evil spirit was cast out of heaven for pride and disobedience; and it is another hell to him to see men restored to the favour of God, and his own former glorious position in heaven occupied by them. He hates our Holy Redeemer, and he endeavours to ruin our souls to spite Him. He gloats over the waste of the sufferings of our Lord, the shedding of His Precious Blood in vain, the mercy of God, powerless to save wilful, obstinate sinners. So when we repent, when we try our best to keep good, his malice against us knows no bounds.

But he can dissemble. His craft is more to be feared than his power. If our souls felt the breath of his hatred and malignity, we should draw back terrified, and seek protection from our Lord. But instead, he lays out allurements, pleasures, bribes, and profits—the joy of living, before our path. We do not see the viper amongst the flowers! He is the father of lies; he is subtle to a degree far beyond our poor intelligences; he has been laying snares for the souls of men since Creation; he should be clever, and, alas! he is. We are only children in his hands—children, fond and foolish, and easily duped.

And his powers are far beyond ours. He is a spirit. He knows no weariness, never relaxes; his knowledge and his experience are masterful. But, thank God! his powers have been curtailed, and he has been chained up, to a certain degree, since the coming of our Lord. If we keep far from him, we are safe. If we venture near, we shall be caught in his snares, or fascinated by

his wiles. So, if we fall into sin and lead a wicked life, we cannot plead as an excuse, that it is all the devil's doing. We have been careless, venturesome, curious, or disobedient, or else we should not have fallen. We have not been afraid of him ; we have not hated him as we should—the enemy of our good God.

Surely no one can be friends with the devil ! No one would own that much, but many by their lives show they certainly are not at warfare with him. They let themselves be deceived by him, as Eve did. They are deserters from the army of Christ, and, unknowingly perhaps, are wearing the devil's uniform and go about doing his work. Many a man will resent this. But it is true, my dear brethren. The devil has an army of workers, besides the evil spirits, that were banished with him from heaven.

Who, then, are the workers—the co-operators with the devil ? Who are his secret assassins, murdering the souls of men ? To mention a few :

Those who indulge in bad talk, who sully the innocence of young souls, and corrupt them by foul and immodest conversation, lewd jokes and songs. And where is the work-room, shop, or yard where men—yea, and women—are not found doing this ?

Those, again, who pass from hand to hand bad books and pictures, teaching wickedness in its most degrading forms. And what about those who write or sell such books ? Knowledge is a good thing, and reading too, but not impure knowledge and reading. In the Apocalypse of St. John we read of the woman "having a golden cup in her hand"—that is, education—but, alas ! it was "full of abomination and filthiness." (Apoc. xvii. 4.) Foul talk, bad books, are the devil's agents.

But there are some who, as St. Paul says, "give place to the devil" worse than this. They bring him into the home, they let him live amongst their children, and only laugh when they learn his ways and wickedness. Bad parents, remember our Lord's words; you will do so for ever, unless you do so now and repent. "But he that shall scandalize one of these little ones that believe in Me, it were better for him that a millstone should be hanged about his neck, and that he should be drowned in the depth of the sea." (Matt. xviii. 6.) Bad parents, who teach their children evil by evil talk, drunkenness, quarrelling, neglecting Mass, despising the laws of the Church, talking against the priest—what are they but the murderers of those very souls which God has given to their keeping to bring up and save? In very truth, are they not the friends and tools of the devil? No man likes to be made a tool of for another man's gain and end. The devil's taunts will not cease for all eternity, when once these dupes, these tools, have lost their own souls, and perhaps ruined their children.

We see, then, the enemy; the reason why he hates us with so much malice; his craft, his powers; the depth of degradation to which he drags us, making us his tools, making us ruin ourselves and the souls of those most dear to us.

Seeing all this, let us be on our guard and resist the evil one. "Resist the devil, and he will fly from you," says St. James (iv. 7). Prayer is the weapon. "Our help is in the Name of the Lord." (Ps. cxxiii. 8.) "That you may be able to stand against the deceits of the devil . . . by all prayer and supplication, praying at all times." (Ephes. vi. 11, 18.)

My dear brethren, no half-hearted resistance will

do. It is not a matter of compromise or give-and-take. The devil means our ruin, in order to dishonour Jesus Christ, and he will never be content with less. It is war to the death. "Brethren, be strengthened in the Lord and in the might of His power; put you on the armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the deceits of the devil" (*ut supra*). Our Lord has warned us "Satan hath desired to have you."

Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost

THE ENEMIES OF THE CHURCH: THEIR ALLY, THE DRINK EVIL

"He, that contemneth small things, shall fall by little and little."—Ecclus. xix. 1.

1. Drink the ally of the enemies of the Church.
2. Resist beginnings; an insidious evil.
3. What leads to it? Sickness, heredity, company.
4. Mother of every vice. Test it by the Commandments; drink breaks all.
5. Be warned, be humble and afraid.

We have studied the great enemies of the Church—the World, the Flesh, and the Devil. Let us now look at their ally—the Drink Evil—and learn to fear it. What a poor, weak text, you will say, my brethren, for a sermon on the devastating evil of drink! You perhaps may think these words are addressed to pious people, warning them not to omit or curtail their devotions. In the Holy Book, from which they are taken, they are preceded and followed by condemnation of drink. (Ecclus. xix. 1, 2.)

And my aim this morning is to warn and frighten beginners, and not to try and reclaim habitual drunkards. One man, who signals and stops a train and averts an accident, does more good than twenty doctors, who, after the collision, attend to the injured.

No one is a drunkard to begin with. How does the

evil take hold of people? "He, that contemneth small things, shall fall by little and little." It is an insidious evil. Some, alas! from heredity, have a lurking craving for it. Woe to those mothers who, through being saturated with drink for years themselves, leave their poor children with this cursed weakness. A taste begets the liking, the liking a craving—a craving that is insatiable.

Others, not prone to this vice, the devil has to lay siege to and make captive in some way. Perhaps they are weak and delicate, and they are ordered wine as a stimulant. They take it, learn to enjoy it; it does them good. There is no sin as yet. But in how many cases is it the beginning of a downfall? The amount is increased; recurrence to it more frequent; then it is craved for; then taken secretly; conscience is stifled, its fears are ridiculed. And another one has proved the text: he would not believe it till he tried himself. "Shall fall by little and little."

And company, good fellowship, the habit of standing treat, the fear of being thought niggardly or cowardly, if you do not the same as others—all this drags off souls of men into the evil, as the trawlers net the helpless fishes of the deep.

Oh the pity of it! If men and women would only listen to a warning, would only be humble and fearful, and learn from the experiences of others, all would be well; but no; each one thinks he will escape, where others have perished.

How simple and easy is the beginning! And for some time no great evil happens. That is the craft of the devil! If you fell into deadly sin at once, you would draw back affrighted, take the pledge, never let drink pass your lips again. Oh no! the devil lets the

liking for it grow, and the habit get a firm, steady hold of you. And you, as yet, have done nothing wrong. So what you read and hear of the evils of drunkenness seems such an exaggeration, that you begin not to believe sermons or holy books. Yes, your better feelings are blunted, your mind is darkened; you are less afraid of it day after day. The liking and the quantity taken grow insensibly—a craving comes on; the power of resisting, weakened already, snaps, and you are helpless. You thought you were a man, and a free man, to do as you liked; and you wake up to find that you are the sodden slave of drink!

The Sacred Books warn us. The Saints of old warn us. Is it any use? Saints Basil, Chrysostom, Ambrose, and Augustine denounce drunkenness. They all four call it "the mother of every vice, the parent of every crime, the root of wickedness."

Let us test whether these words are exaggerations; if so, they lose their power, and harm the cause instead of aiding it. According to them the drink evil is the greatest of all, for it leads to all sin, to the breaking of all the Commandments. Is that so? Is it not enough to break one? Can it be that Catholic men and Catholic women give themselves over to a vice, that breaks all the Ten Commandments?

See for yourselves. The First Commandment: "The Lord thy God thou shalt adore, and Him only shalt thou serve." And St. Paul points at the drunkards: "Whose God is their belly" (Phil. iii. 19). Adore, pray, raise up your mind and heart! How can he? St. Cyril says: "Drink dulls the senses, leads captive the mind, dims the sight, ties the tongue, and dishonours it." We have all heard the senseless babbling of a drunken man; could that be prayer?

And the Second Commandment : "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain." Oaths, curses, and blasphemies are the language of the drunkard, even in the case of those, who otherwise do not commonly sin in this way.

"Remember thou keep holy the Sabbath day." Remember! How can he? The drunkard has no senses to remember with. And when the Church bells ring for Mass they fail to waken him out of his drunken sleep. God's day is dishonoured by the drunkard.

The Fourth Commandment! Poor children, how can you keep that, when you see your parents drunk? Honour her, a drunken woman, a mother! "Her reproach and her shame shall not be hid." (Ecclus. xxvi. 11.) Honour that man, and call him father! He is the thief of the household; he has drunk the money that should keep and provide for you; he makes you an outcast from the Church; and you have to honour him!

Quarrellings and murder, forbidden by the Fifth Commandment. Does not drunkenness lead up to nine-tenths of these crimes? And the sixth. Drink is scarcely ever mentioned in the Scripture without a reference to the sins against the Sixth Commandment. They are not nice even to read, and some very foul to utter. The Seventh he breaks, stealing from his children to spend on drink. And the Eighth Commandment, too, because when his vile passions are stirred up, no man's good name, no woman's good name, is safe with a drunkard. "His tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity." (Jas. iii. 6.) And the Ninth and Tenth Commandments. There is no restraint about them. Drunkards are seething with bad desires, unrestrainedly indulged in.

Yea, even worse may follow: a drunkard's death is no uncommon thing. Alas! then our Lord's words come true: "You shall die in your sins." (John viii. 24.)

My dear brethren, will you be wise and take a word of warning? You may never yet have been tempted to drink, but you can be humble and afraid of it. Make up your minds to resist the beginnings. Pray for those, who are the slaves to it, that you may have the holy fear of it yourselves. Draw back at once if your foot is set on the downward path. Ask God for humility and holy fear, the only safeguard, for "he, that contemneth small things, shall fall by little and little."

Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost

THE GOOD SAMARITAN THE TYPE OF OUR LORD

"But a certain Samaritan, being on his journey, came near, and seeing him, was moved with compassion."—LUKE x. 33.

1. The parable become a proverb.
2. The literal meaning.
3. The sacred meaning open to all Christians.
4. A deeper and Sacramental meaning for Catholics.
5. Be grateful, for how often have we been befriended by the Good Samaritan.

THE very name of this parable has passed into a proverb; one word recalls it all—the good Samaritan.

The parable being given as an answer to the question, "Who is my neighbour?" we are struck by the infinite skill, with which our Blessed Lord embodied so much in a seemingly simple answer.

He explained to the lawyer; He rebuked the Pharisees, with a lifelike sketch of their own days and doings; He praised the poor outcast Samaritan; to future ages He withdrew the veil, and disclosed Himself as the Samaritan; to the eyes of faith He showed the scheme of Redemption, the sacramental powers, the refuge the Church was to be to the souls of men.

The scene was well known to our Blessed Lord's hearers. The inn they had passed many a time. They knew why He mentioned priests and Levites as the travellers, because of the great college at Jericho,

whence they came and returned after their ministrations in the temple of Jerusalem. They knew why the place was subject to robbers, as it lay on the borders of the desert ; and that it was the route for the Samaritan's journey.

Thus they saw the splendid answer to " Who is my neighbour ?" " He that showed mercy." They smarted under the covert rebuke, that priests and Levites should know not charity, but that a despised Samaritan should teach them the lesson.

But there is a wider and more sacred signification than this. It is a picture of Christ by Christ Himself ! No wonder our Blessed Lady kept all such words in her heart, and that St. Luke narrates them so beautifully.

Who is the original good Samaritan ? Our Blessed Lord. The traveller was mankind, and his enemy the devil met him, robbed him, stripped him, and left him half dead. Former religions, the priests and Levites, passed by ; they could give no redemption to fallen man. But at length Christ came on His journey from heaven through the world : " being on his journey came near him, and seeing him was moved with compassion . . . bound up his wounds . . . and took care of him." (Luke x. 33, 34.)

The Jews only saw the rebuke about their want of charity, but all Christians can see this application. But here Protestant and Nonconformist stop, or see but little more. To us Catholics every word has a meaning and a value.

In the remedies we see the Sacraments—oil and wine —sacred symbols are they to us. Into our wounds Christ pours the oil. Twice at Baptism is the child anointed with holy oil, again at Confirmation. The sacred chrism again used at the ordination of a priest,

blessing his hands to offer the Holy Mass, and at the consecration of a bishop, giving him the fulness of sacerdotal grace. And again the holy oil is used to strengthen the dying in their last conflict, to cleanse and comfort their souls, in the Sacrament of Extreme Unction.

And the wine to revive the poor, half-dead traveller tells us of the Precious Blood of Jesus—the Blood that redeemed us, the Blood which is on our altar, when the wine is consecrated during Mass.

"And he took him to the inn." The Church is the inn, for our home is heaven. The Church, then, is a shelter, a house, where we travellers find rest, food, comfort, medicine at the sole charge of Christ. "Take care of him: and whatsoever thou shalt spend over and above, I at my return will repay thee." (*Ibid.*, v. 35.) The treasures and the merits of Christ's Redemption to be used for us by the Church, till He returns.

Does not this parable, then, contain the scheme of our Redemption? Is it not good for us to understand and ponder over this parable? What else could teach us and instruct us as well as the words of Christ Himself? The fall of man; our ruin by sin; our enemy the devil; our helplessness only for the mercy of God, which came down from heaven, journeying through this valley of tears, and seeing our utter desolation, was moved with compassion—is not all this brought home to us in a word? And the mention of the elements of the Sacraments—oil and wine—fill us with consternation at the thought of how little remembrance and gratitude we have had for them. And the safe shelter and guardianship of the Church—have we thanked God for that? And every grace and favour we need, to

be given us from the merits of Jesus Christ. In our dark hours and trials, it comforts us to know all this and to remember it. The good Samaritan is our own Blessed Lord. We know it and believe it.

Just before this parable our Lord had said : " Blessed are the eyes that see the things that you see." (*Ibid.*, v. 23.) Ay, that see God's mercy ; that see the Good Samaritan is indeed our Lord ; that see how often He came near and befriended us. For wilfully we have left the shelter of the Church, and ventured into the paths of the wicked, and fallen again among thieves ; and yet, we have been searched for and found by the Good Samaritan, and brought back again and cared for, and never a word of reproach, not a harsh look, but only pity and tenderness from that loving heart.

But what meanness and ingratitude to treat in this way our good Neighbour, the Saviour, Who has shown mercy to us. Let it be our life's work, humbly to keep near Him, to follow Him, to be faithful to Him.

Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost

A TYPE OF OURSELVES

"There is no one found to return and give glory to God, but this stranger."—Luke xvii. 18.

1. The miracle.
2. The lepers represent sinners, and nine out of ten never thanked our Lord.
3. Which do we resemble ?
4. Prayer is thanksgiving as well as petition.
5. Gratitude softens our heart, is most acceptable to God, and wins fresh graces for us.

We cannot afford, my dear brethren, to pass by the Gospel read to-day. It is a picture, in which we shall find ourselves. Which likeness is ours ? That is just the question. Nine, that received God's mercy, disappointed our Blessed Lord ; only one was grateful and was commended.

At the entrance of a certain town ten men, who were lepers, lifted up their voice, saying : "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us." Whom when He saw He said : "Go, show yourselves to the priests." And it came to pass that as they went, they were made clean. And one of them, when he saw that he was made clean, went back, with a loud voice glorifying God : and he fell on his face before His feet, giving thanks ; and this was a Samaritan. And Jesus, answering, said : "Were not ten made clean ? and where are the nine ?

There is no one found to return and give glory to God, but this stranger."

My dear brethren, repeatedly in the Scripture leprosy is spoken of as the type of sin. So we must not be offended, when we are told that these ten lepers represent ourselves, for we are all sinners. Not once, but many a time, have we had cause to cry out: "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us." And the mercy of God did not disdain us. The answer has always been: "Go, show yourselves to the priests." In the Sacrament of Penance, the priest has really power to forgive us our sins and cleanse our souls; in the Old Law, they merely gave a certificate that the leper was made clean.

But what happened when they were made clean, that so hurt the Sacred Heart of our Lord that He complained? He freely cured them at a word. Yes, God's grace is given freely; the only price is thanks. God loves to be thanked. It was the thanklessness of nine out of ten that made our Blessed Saviour utter the reproach.

If ingratitude were not a common sin, this miracle would not have happened so. We must not say nine ungrateful out of ten, that were cured, is out of all proportion. If it were not true, our Blessed Lord would not have drawn notice to it in so marked a manner. Only one, and he a Samaritan, to return and give glory to God.

Are we classed by God amongst the nine, or, happily, are we pictured by the grateful one?

Let us test ourselves and see. Many pray a good deal, but is not the asking, begging, petitioning out of all proportion to the thanksgiving? "In everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your peti-

tions be made known to God." (Phil. iv. 6.) "Giving thanks always for all things, in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ." (Eph. v. 20.) And how often is it the case, that those, who seem to have the least to thank God for, are the most grateful? The old and the poor, whose life is a burden, and, one would think, a misery to them, and the bedridden and afflicted are often heard blessing and thanking God for little favours that others would take for granted.

And another way we can test our spirit of thankfulness is this: is our gratitude as fervent after confession and absolution, as our anxiety was keen before? There is an old saying, "Eaten bread is soon forgotten." And God's favours, once received, are soon forgotten too.

The practice of being thankful has a good effect on our own heart. Selfishness naturally makes us hard. Gratitude takes us out of self, by referring the good we have received to the kindness of another. So the spirit of thankfulness makes our hearts kind and tender. A grateful heart is a joy to itself.

Such a heart receives and imbibes fresh graces from God. The graces do not run like thunder-rain from parched ground; they sink in, and make it more and more fertile in piety and goodness.

But the wonderful power of gratitude is over God. Yes, over the Almighty. Why, from the very first, did God demand sacrifices and holocausts to be offered Him? To make men thank Him. To show their homage, their dependence on Him,—that all was His. And the Scriptures tell us how He delighted in sacrifices —Abel's, Melchisedec's, Abraham's, when he was ready, at God's word, to sacrifice his only son. And there is one sacrifice that God never rejected. Sometimes He

turned away His face from holocausts and burnt-offerings, but never from a contrite and humble heart, returning its love and thanks and devotedness to Him Who made it. And at no time can we feel gratitude more keenly than when sin has been forgiven. "O Lord, Thou wilt open my lips, and my mouth shall declare Thy praise. . . . A sacrifice to God is an afflicted spirit; a contrite and humble heart, O Lord, Thou wilt not despise." (Ps. l. 17, 19.) Picture the prodigal's gratitude on his return, when he realized his father's love and forgiveness. And what a welcome that gratitude merited from the father!

Being grateful makes our own hearts happy; pleases God, and causes Him to shower down His choicest blessings on our soul. We have not been sufficiently grateful in the past; be humble, and afraid that we have actually been ungrateful. Nine out of ten never thanked the good Saviour for their cure. The only price for fresh blessings is thankfulness and gratitude for past ones. After every blessing "return and give glory to God."

Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost

THE FIRST, SECOND, AND THIRD COMMANDMENTS

"The Lord thy God thou shalt adore, and Him only shalt thou serve."—MATT. iv. 10.

1. The authority of the Commandments, why given.
2. The first is practically fulfilled by prayer.
3. The second commonly broken for nothing.
4. The third impressive: "Remember." The actual observances laid down by the Church.
5. The sad neglect of Sunday's Mass.

THESE words of our Blessed Lord, my dear brethren, remind us of the authority and power of the Commandments. They are a quotation from the words of Moses, and he gave them to the children of Israel as the words of the Almighty giving him the Law. The Commandments of the Old Law were renewed by Christ, the Son of God, in the New. They, then, have a double claim on our obedience and reverence. Stand by them, and your salvation is assured. "Thou shalt know that the Lord thy God, He is a strong and faithful God, keeping His covenant and mercy to them that love Him, and to them that keep His commandments unto a thousand generations." (Deut. vii. 9.)

Yet there are men who resent them. They declare that the Commandments infringe upon their liberty; and because no immediate penalty is dealt out to them for breaking them, they deride those who keep them

as being slaves to tyranny. Whereas, how thankful we should be for the Ten Commandments! God knows what is good for us; He gives us them as safeguards. True, obedience costs something; but remember, obedience is always rewarded. The Commandments an infringement on our liberty! As well say a fireguard in a nursery is an infringement on the liberty of the children! Instead, then, of resenting the Commandments, we should accept them with gratitude, and the work of our life is to keep them faithfully.

Knowledge of them, therefore, is necessary. And the more we understand them, the more we shall be led to love and reverence them.

The first three Commandments regard Almighty God: our worship for Him; our respect for His very Name; our obligation to keep holy one day each week in His honour. The first is fulfilled by our acknowledging the one true God, by adoration and worship, and turning from all others to Him alone. Prayer, then, practically is the fulfilment of it—prayer, by which we acknowledge Him Lord and Master; by which we desire His honour and glory; by which we turn to Him in all our needs; by which we ask our Father's pardon for all our shortcomings and negligences. Each day claims this time for prayer, and we cannot even limit it to certain times, for in danger and temptation we are bound to seek help and protection in prayer.

And the Second Commandment hedges round the Name of God with respect and veneration. "Thou shalt not take the Name of the Lord thy God in vain; for he shall not be unpunished that taketh His Name upon a vain thing." (Deut. v. 11.) This is the Commandment which is broken, more than any other, for

nothing! In laughter, in a joke, in surprise, as a mere exclamation, the sacred Name of God, the sacred Name of Jesus, is drawn down by young and old alike in vain. But how much more terrible, when greed, drink, rage, revenge, burst out into oaths and curses and blasphemies. Any exclamation can show your anger; why offend the Almighty by dragging down His sacred Name? Check yourselves, lest you give bad example by such words. The habit is soon learned, and seldom overcome. What a judgment awaits those who contaminate the young! "He shall not go unpunished."

Impressive is the wording of the Third Commandment: "Remember thou shalt keep holy the Sabbath day." God demands this observance from us, week after week. By observing it, we acknowledge that we are His servants and His children; we bless Him for the Redemption He has granted us; we draw down fresh graces and blessings on our souls. And those who do not remember? Those who forget and wilfully neglect—what of them? They insult the great God by their disobedience and contempt. Their forgetfulness even is no excuse, for they are commanded to remember!

And how are we to keep the day holy? So that there should be no error or mistake about this, the first Precept of the Church lays down: "To keep the Sundays and holidays of obligation holy, by hearing Mass and resting from servile work." And the Catechism declares it a mortal sin to neglect Mass on these days. And we are bound to obey the Church and accept its ordinances, for Christ has said: "He that heareth you heareth Me; and he that despiseth you despiseth Me." (Luke x. 16.) There are certain valid reasons, excusing from Mass and allowing work. In certain employments, to prevent grave loss, the work,

of a necessity, has to be continued on Sundays. In those cases the workmen are free from sin, both in labouring and in missing Mass. Again, the sick, those nursing the sick, those dwelling too far off, are free from the obligation of Mass. But we have to be on our guard against laxity, against opening the door too wide to excuses and pleas ; else laziness, unwillingness, neglect even, dress themselves up in a cloak of some kind of excuse.

It is sad to see how easily the habit of missing Mass can be acquired. How the conscience becomes torpid, and never gives any sign of fear or remorse for the dreadful sin. No wonder their souls are dead, for they stay away from that which would give them life. It is the cry, wrung from the Sacred Heart of Jesus by those who miss Mass : " You will not come to Me that you may have life." (1 John v. 10.)

How can such neglect be accounted for ? Do they know their obligation ? Yes. Do they believe in the Sacrifice of the Mass, and understand it ? Yes. Any excuse is made—you know what frivolous ones—but the reason, not the excuse, is their insolent indifference to God. They have learned to have no respect for Him, no care, no love, no fear. St. Paul cries out to them : " O senseless Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ has been set forth, crucified among you ?" (Gal. iii. 1.) This is what takes place at every Mass, but they care not.

My dear brethren, reverence Holy Mass all the more devoutly yourselves. Pray for those who neglect it. Let your prayer be : O Lord, " look not on the stubbornness of this people, nor on their wickedness and sin." (Deut. ix. 27.)

Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost

THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT

"Honour thy father and thy mother."—Exod. xx. 12.

1. So well known, so little observed. Whose fault? Parents' oftentimes.
2. Duties of parents: love, work for, educate, train religiously, good example.
3. Children's faults: hate control, see faults, think they know best.
4. Gratitude and the promise of God help observance of this Commandment.

It is disheartening, my dear brethren, to preach on this Commandment. It is so well known, so little observed. Fresh knowledge about it can hardly be imparted; and who can hope to implant respect and reverence for it in the hearts of the young?

How is this? The very names, father and mother, are high titles indeed. They are the stewards of God. To them He entrusts the immortal souls, as well as the bodies of their children. To have faithfully fulfilled the duties of a good father or mother is indeed a valid claim to the kingdom of heaven.

But, my dear brethren, how many parents themselves forget their dignity and responsibility—lower themselves, and are themselves answerable for their children's disrespect and disobedience. So this Fourth Commandment regards parents as well as children.

Parents must be worthy fathers and mothers, with a knowledge of their high calling, and religiously living up to that high calling, or they are themselves the cause of their children's sins. For a trade there is an apprenticeship, a business has to be learned; but how few young people, when they rush into matrimony, give even a thought as to the responsibility of becoming parents. Young, foolish, not too religious themselves, perhaps getting married in disobedience to their own parents, how are they fitted in the slightest degree to fulfil the duties of good parents?

Their duties are to love their children, their souls, far more than their bodies or their worldly happiness; to tend, care, work for them; to educate them; to give them good example and shield them from evil.

Take these one by one, for they are the life-work of good parents: if these duties are fulfilled, the children indeed should honour their father and mother.

Love their souls. An early baptism is the anxiety of good parents, and the first words for the infant lips to form, "Jesus" and "Mary." Long before school age, the sign of the cross, short prayers, and to do as they are bidden should be taught them. Yes, obedience, even that early in life, and quiet, grave correction, no haste or passion, and the infant mind will soon see who has to be master. What more hateful sight on earth, than a petted child mastering its own parents!

Their bodies, their health and welfare, require constant unselfish watchfulness on the part of the mother. And the father, by daily toil, provides food, clothing, and home for them. A parent's work is indeed a prayer, if done for the love of God.

Education, as the children grow up, is an anxiety

for the parents. A Catholic school must be chosen, and regular attendance insisted on to gain lifelong habits of carefulness and industry. Teachers and priests do a great work, but good parents a far greater. What are school hours to the continued influence of home? The good of the school is paralyzed by a bad home, but strengthened and formed into habits by a good one. Daily prayers, Sunday's Mass, frequenting the Sacraments, are all in the hands of the parents.

Good example to be given calls for continued watchfulness on the part of the parents. Children are so quick to pick up evil, and yet thoughtless parents talk of matters before them, that children should never hear mentioned. And what about parents who quarrel, use bad language, are drunk before their children? Of parents, who miss Mass and are out of the Church? They make the Commandment an impossibility.

But if parents have been faithful to their duties, they can justly claim love, respect, and obedience from their children.

Now, let us look at this Commandment from the children's point of view. It is only human nature to hate to be controlled; and the young have not much idea of doing anything from a spiritual motive. And they are quick, too quick, to see faults even in good parents, and very soon to think they know best—that their parents are too strict and old-fashioned. They grumble; others are not treated like that; things have changed since their parents were children. Oh, the devil will fill their minds with specious excuses and arguments, for he hates the young to keep this Fourth Commandment. May they give ear to better counsel, and stand by this Commandment! To be obedient is to be safe; to be obedient is to be victorious in the

battle of life ; to be obedient is to unite ourselves to, and become like, our Master, Jesus Christ.

And is there not gratitude insisting on children to honour their father and mother ? Gratitude ? Yes, they have well earned it ! For how many years has each child been a care, an anxiety to its parents ? Many a long hour have they sat up, tending you in your ailments and accidents ; many a comfort and pleasure have they begrudged themselves to give to you. How have they sought your good and advancement, effacing themselves, that you might get on. Beware of ingratitude ; it will taint your heart for life.

You will not always have your parents ; be kind and loving to them whilst they are with you. "Son, support the old age of thy father, and grieve him not in his life. . . . Have patience with him, and despise him not in thy strength, for the relieving of thy father shall not be forgotten." (Ecclus. iii. 14, 15.) Is it not true that we do not know the value of a mother till we have lost her ? And then we can only requite her love with a few tardy tears. The graveyard is not the only time or place to show gratitude to your parents.

And to encourage us to keep this Commandment, remember it is the Commandment with a promise. For fear we should forget or grow tired of keeping it, God tells us what He will do if we fulfil it. "Honour thy father and thy mother, that thou mayest be long lived upon the land, which the Lord thy God will give thee." (Exod. xx. 12.) And again : "that thou mayest live a long time, and it may be well with thee." (Deut. v. 16.) And to those who have loved and honoured their father and mother, how consoling these words of the Holy Spirit : "He that honoureth his

mother is as one that layeth up a treasure. He that honoureth his father shall have joy in his own children, and in the day of his prayer he shall be heard. . . . He shall enjoy a long life. Honour thy father in work and word and all patience, that a blessing may come to thee from him, and his blessing remain to the latter end. . . . In justice thou shalt be built up, and in the day of affliction thou shalt be remembered: and thy sins shall melt away, as the ice in the fair, warm weather." (Ecclus. iii. 5-17.)

Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost

THE REST OF THE COMMANDMENTS

"Keep the commandments of the Lord thy God, and walk in His ways, and fear Him."—DEUT. viii. 6.

1. These Commandments are safeguards to prevent us falling into deadly sin.
2. Not only the ultimate forbidden, but all sins leading to it, exemplify this in the case of the fifth, sixth, seventh Commandments. Aids to keep safe.
3. The ninth and tenth to guard our very thoughts and hearts.

THE rest of the Commandments, my dear brethren, are safeguards against our own selves. We are all prone to evil. Our natural inclinations, if not kept under and corrected, would lead us to deadly sin. We cannot do as we like in this world, and be saved. So the Commandments stake out the path to heaven for us, lest wandering we should be lost. The Commandments are there to prevent us falling into the seven deadly sins.

As pride leads us to disobey God and refuse honour to our parents, so by anger and envy we break the Fifth and Eighth Commandments; quarrels, murders, lies, and calumny are their children. Lust, gluttony, and sloth are the causes of the Sixth and Ninth Commandments being violated. And breaking the Seventh and Tenth—stealing and wishing to steal—are the

result of covetousness. So our only chance of keeping out of these deadly sins is to " keep the commandments of the Lord thy God, and walk in His ways and fear Him."

What little beginnings of carelessness lead to disastrous results! A murderer, on the scaffold now, was once innocent, nursed and fondled by a mother. We see the ending, but where did the evil start? We know where we shall end—in mortal sin and the loss of our souls—unless we stand by and keep the Commandments. To renew our fear, let us briefly pass them in review, for it is not enough to keep out of the final sin forbidden, but we must draw back and shun the lesser sins, that lead to that fatal fall.

Thus, " Thou shalt not kill " forbids also those sins that might lead up to murder. And they likewise can be mortal sins; as anger, hatred, revenge, and their sequels, quarrelling, fighting, and doing injury. And the murder of the soul is forbidden too, brought about by scandal and bad example.

This is how the Fifth Commandment is broken; but to keep it we have to be men of peace, for they " are called the children of God." We cannot even be angry with our brother, or say, " Thou fool." We have to be reconciled to our brother before we come to the altar. We have to keep that word, " Love your enemies, and do good to them that hate you." (Matt. v. 44.) These are the virtues that will grow in a heart that keeps this Commandment devoutly. How easily are most content with not openly breaking it, but allowing a lurking dislike or spite smouldering in their hearts. Be not deceived. St. John tells us: " Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer." (1 John iii. 15.)

We know to what depths of shame the violation of the Sixth Commandment will lead those, who give themselves up to it. With this, especially, it is necessary to resist the beginnings. You must be on the watch against, and at enmity with, sloth and intemperance, and your own inclinations and passions. Many of the pleasures, which others indulge in, are not for you ; you must avoid them like a pestilence, if you would keep chaste. Theatres, dances, gay companions, books, songs, pictures—we have to be brave enough to fling all such aside, that have in any way shown the taint of impurity. This is hard, and continually to be doing it is beyond our strength, but not beyond His strength, Who asks us to do it for His sake. Frequent confession and Communion are your safeguards in this warfare. Ask our Lord that you may not abandon His love, for the love of anything forbidden by the Sixth Commandment.

There are many, thank God, who never feel tempted to break the Seventh Commandment, "Thou shalt not steal." But there are many more, whose self-complacency will receive a shock, if they will examine all that is included in these words. It is not only pick-pockets and burglars who break this word ; there are many others. There is that respectable shopkeeper who is not above a little sharp practice ; weights and measures have a knack of favouring their master ; adulteration enlarges profit ; and the prices asked are not always the exact ones. And is this wrong ? Most certainly ; and the greed will grow upon him. And those, who recklessly incur debt, or, being in debt, do not make a real effort to repay, are dishonest. They did not take the goods, but they are keeping back the value of them unjustly. And restitution—there is the

difficulty. If you have the thing, how hard to part with it! but much harder if you have spent what was taken, and you have to save up now, little by little, to repay it. Is it worth while, even as regards this world, if we had no soul to save, no God to please, to be dishonest? A mean, contemptible thing it is; and how hard to get clear of the consequences of it!

But who shall say that he never breaks the Eighth Commandment—"He that sins not in word, the same is a perfect man"? (James iii. 2.) Lies, rash judgment, tale-bearing, detraction, calumny—all are included under this precept. And if you steal away your neighbour's good name, you are bound to restore it, as far as you are able. Try to keep this rule: "Do unto others as you would like others to do to you." Then their good name would be safe, and you would bid fair to be a perfect man.

The Ninth and Tenth Commandments probe our very heart's core. Our Blessed Lord has said: "From the heart come forth evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false testimonies, blasphemies." (Matt. xv. 19.) And to keep us out of such sins, the law forbids us entertain and indulge in such desires. How low, indeed, we must be fallen if, to make room for such guests as these foul desires, our Blessed Lord is turned out, Who longs to be the King of our hearts!

This is our lifelong work: "Keep the Commandments." Be not faint-hearted. In every command from God there is a promise of help, if we attempt it; a sure reward, if we fulfil it. "He that hath My Commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me. And he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him." (John xiv. 21.)

Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost

RESPONSIBILITY

"Walk worthy of the vocation in which you are called." —EPHES. iv. 1.

1. We cannot help being responsible.
2. Responsible to ourselves, to others—neighbours, children; to God, the Master.
3. There will be a day of reckoning.
4. Remembrance of the love of Him Who called us, helps us to walk worthy.

To be Catholics, my dear brethren, will not suffice for our salvation. We must be good Catholics. "Walk worthy of the vocation in which you are called." There are no honorary members in the Catholic Church. There is no such thing as living on your means in the spiritual life. We all have to be working men. Now, no man will work his best, unless he sees the obligation, and that there is a grave responsibility resting on him. Let us try to rouse ourselves to the sense of this responsibility to-day.

God's grace has called us, chosen us, has done us an honour in singling us out. And can we not all see that there is an obligation, a responsibility of acting up to that grace, and walking worthy of that calling? Dare we throw that grace back again, and tell God that we do not want it? No; our salvation depends on acting up to God's grace. So we are in this world laden

with a responsibility, from which we cannot free ourselves.

We are responsible, first, to ourselves. We are made up of body and soul; and most men, foolishly and wickedly, think too much of their body, and neglect their soul. Every comfort and pleasure and luxury must be procured for the body, which will shortly perish and corrupt; and nothing or very little is done to secure eternal happiness for their immortal soul. Men do not give themselves time to think, or they would act differently. And yet it is but a fool's excuse to say: "Oh, I did not think!" Alas, the eternal remorse, when it is all too late, to think what we might have been, what we might have done! Half an hour's thought now about our responsibility would be of far more avail, than an eternity of bitter repining hereafter.

And in this life we are responsible, too, for others—those we come in contact with. This may seem hard, but it is true. We cannot help influencing others for good or for evil. Each word or act may make or mar a soul. Of each you will hear again at Judgment. If responsible for others, friends, acquaintances, neighbours, how much more are parents responsible for their children! Innocent, impressionable, they look to their parents naturally for knowledge and guidance. This responsibility is ever with you, you fathers and mothers. Forgetting it will not save you from it. If children grow up disobedient, untruthful, shirkers of prayers and of Mass, using bad language, old in wickedness though children in years, who is responsible for it all? Easy-going, gossiping mothers, lazy, drunken, foul-mouthed fathers, neither of whom have ever troubled about the children's prayers, nor taken them by the

hand to Sunday's Mass. Such parents forget their responsibility now, but they will remember it hereafter. For ever will the reproach of their children's cry be ringing in their ears : " Only for you, we should not have been lost !"

But, good parents, be not dismayed at the responsibility ; God will help you in your work. Good parents ! The very name is the key with which to open heaven ! What an honour, what a proud responsibility, to see to and watch over the souls of your children, and thus to stand in the place of the Great Father in heaven !

Lastly, dear brethren, we are responsible to God. It is He Who has given us our capabilities and our chances, and He demands, and He has the right to demand, that we shall use them well. Our Blessed Lord makes this very evident in the Gospel. He tells us of the master who entrusted various sums of money to his servants, and he expected them to trade with them and make profit. And then come the words, which will be verified in our own case some day : " But after a long time the master of those servants came and reckoned with them." (Matt. xxv. 19.) Reckoned with them ! We shall each have to go through that day of reckoning. Oh, my dear brethren, think of it now, prepare for it now, or what will be the judgment ? Every servant who had been faithful even in small things, who had made something, was rewarded. But there was one wicked and slothful servant ; to him the Lord said : " And the unprofitable servant cast ye out into exterior darkness." Notice, my brethren, that man was not a thief ; there was nothing brought against him, save that he had not used his master's money profitably ; he had not made anything.

This is a view, perhaps a new view, which should fill us with holy fear. Many amongst us here present have done very little harm ; they are quiet, respectable people—yes, they have done very little harm, and have done very little good ! What have they made with the graces given them ? They have hidden them, buried them. Very little harm ! but what about their sins of omission ? What good they might have done, had they only been in earnest ! and it is only the earnest, who will push their way to the kingdom of God.

We cannot stand with arms folded, and let life glide by, without unworthily neglecting our duty. God has called us, and with every command of God there is given the power to fulfil it. So the vocation will not save us, but the walking worthy of it ; not the calling, but the obeying. To fulfil our responsibility towards God, we must use His graces well. We must be in earnest, devout, throw our hearts into our work.

And if we look at Him Who has called us, this would not appear so hard and unpleasant. Look at our Blessed Lord. His Sacred Heart was pierced on the cross, but even that did not quench His love. Who can refuse zeal and fidelity and love in the work given us to do, if we think of the Sacred Heart ? Walk worthy of our vocation, to fit ourselves to be His friend ; walk worthy to influence others to love Him ; walk worthy, out of obedience and loyalty to Him of Whom St. Peter says : " Christ suffered for us, leaving you an example that you should follow His steps." (1 Peter ii. 21.)

Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost

CHOSEN, BUT NOT WORTHY

"His own city."—MATT. ix. 1.

1. The privileged city; what happened there.
2. Its denunciation. Why?
3. We are His own chosen ones, too; favoured the same; shall we be denounced the same?
4. Our Saviour's final words.

WHAT a privilege to be styled "His own city"! The favoured, the chosen city of Christ. And what place is referred to? Is it Bethlehem, for sweet memory's sake of that first Christmas night? Or Nazareth, blessed as the home of the Holy Family so long? No. Jerusalem, where He taught, kept the festivals, and wrought so many wonders among the people? None of these. That favoured spot, "His own city," stood by the Sea of Galilee, for the Gospel says: "And entering into a boat, He passed over the water, and came into His own city." (Matt. ix. 1.) This was the first place He came to after His baptism; here He dwelt for awhile with His first disciples, Peter and Andrew, James and John. It was outside this town, on the rising hillside, to accommodate the multitude, that Christ preached His first sermon, taught the eight Beatitudes and the "Our Father." From Simon's boat, in front of this town, He taught the

people, and its inhabitants saw the miraculous draught of fishes. Here dwelt the nobleman whose son He cured; here He healed the demoniac in the synagogue. Here He spoke the word that made whole the centurion's servant, and raised the daughter of Jairus to life. It was to this city He came after feeding the five thousand people, and in its synagogue He told them that He was the Bread of Life. "He that eateth this Bread shall live for ever." "These things He said, teaching in the synagogue in Capharnaum." (John vi. 60.) Yes, my dear brethren, that is the name of Christ's own city, as St. Matthew calls it—Capharnaum.

We all naturally envy such a favoured place, and wish we had the chances, the lessons, the sight of those wondrous miracles with which its people were blessed.

But, my dear brethren, this is not all about Capharnaum. Turn over two chapters in St. Matthew's Gospel, in which our Lord sent the disciples to preach, and John the Baptist from prison had sent to ask if He was the Saviour that was to come. Then you will read these words: "Then began He to upbraid the cities, wherein were done most of His miracles, for that they had not done penance. . . . And thou, Capharnaum, shalt thou be exalted up to heaven? thou shalt go down even unto hell. For if in Sodom had been wrought the miracles that have been wrought in thee, perhaps it had remained until this day. But I say unto you that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for thee." (Matt. xi. 20-24.)

Is there anything, my dear brethren, more dreadful, more terrifying than these words of our Saviour to those for whom He had done so much? You see,

God's graces and favours are not everything; they have to be gratefully received and faithfully acted up to. What instructions they had heard! What miracles they had witnessed! They had got used even to miracles, for our Lord said to them: "Amen, amen, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you have seen miracles, but because you did eat of the loaves, and were filled." (John vi. 26.) What sordid motives led them to follow Christ! We could not have believed, had not He Himself declared it.

Let us turn and look upon our own selves. We, too, are "His own city." We, too, are His favoured ones, and which one of us has been always true to Christ? The children of God we are, and others know Him not. We have our home in this His own city, the Church. His miracles were wrought for our instruction, and some of them were only mere figures of what has been worked in our souls.

For instance, our Lord seemed to forget, when the man sick of the palsy was brought to Him; for He said: "Thy sins are forgiven thee," and not a word about his cure. Our Lord did not forget; He was thinking of us, and how that wonder of forgiveness would be renewed countless times for us. Again, when He blessed the loaves and fed the multitude, He had us—ourselves—in His blessed mind and heart. Please God, He did not see us murmur and leave Him when He explained the Blessed Sacrament! But those who receive the Blessed Eucharist so seldom, who are careless about Mass, are they not amongst those who "walked no more with Him"? (John vi. 67.)

So, to be Catholics, to profess the right religion, to listen, to attend, is not enough, and will not save us from being denounced as Capharnaum was. All the

woe came upon it "because they had not done penance." (Matt. xi. 20.) They had not turned from their sins, repented of them, amended their lives. We cannot live in sin, and be friends with God. Turn from sin, do God's holy will, and obey the Church.

Let us be grateful indeed for this example of Capharnaum. There is still time for us to profit from it. Our Blessed Saviour does not wish to denounce us and condemn us. He wants us to be faithful to Him, love Him, and be saved.

The same chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel bears me out in this. For what did our Lord add after His angry words? His Sacred Heart seemed to check His anger, and after a few lines we read: "Come to Me, all you that labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you. Take up My yoke upon you, and learn of Me, because I am meek and humble of heart; For My yoke is sweet, and My burden light." (Matt. xi. 28-30.)

Grateful for having been chosen as His own, cheerfully give yourselves to His service. Be nothing daunted. He will be ever near us, that we may learn of Him. Manfully take up His yoke upon you, and the blessing of obedience in so doing will make the yoke sweet and the burden light.

Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost

INDIFFERENCE

"But they neglected."—Matt. xxii. 5.

1. We are all negligent; and neglect more dangerous than we think.
2. What are we neglecting, and for what? Pleasure, profit, and these for how long?
3. Effects of neglect: blindness of heart, mortal sin, final impenitence.

These few words, my dear brethren, in the Gospel, "but they neglected," touch our consciences in a tender, perhaps a sore part. The souls of every one of us are soiled with negligence. Many might object to own that they lived in sin, but they would be bound to admit negligence, indifference. Please note that in the Gospel, all those who neglected had excuses; but their excuses availed them nothing.

In reality, neglect is a dangerous evil—not, perhaps, so much from what it is as to what it leads. A cold on the chest may mean nothing; neglected, it may mean pneumonia and a premature death.

When we grow careless, whether it is about our prayers, cutting them down or saying them distractedly; or about our Holy Communions, no regularity, no earnestness; or about good example and care of our children, or in drifting into bad company;

or in compromising, being afraid to make a bold stand for our religion—do not let us think these trifles.

For in reality what are we neglecting ? The call of the Great King, our Father, Master, Redeemer. He expects this life to be a preparation—earnest preparation—for the union with His Son in the eternal kingdom. He bids us to come, to make ready to come, to have the wedding-garment of grace prepared. And most of us neglect ! We hear talk of the strenuous life ; where is our earnestness and endeavour to prepare for and hasten to the kingdom of heaven ?

And for what are we neglecting to make sure of heaven ? For pleasure ? And is living in neglect and in sin such a pleasure ? A bad conscience is a cheerful companion ! And the shame and remorse make our laughter hollow and our joys a mockery.

For profit ? All we get by neglecting God does us as much good as the thirty pieces of silver, for which he sold our Lord, did Judas ! How few can command riches in this world ! It is only one, here and there, who makes a fortune ; and one in a million, who is content with what he has. And the struggle for wealth and harassing cares have broken down his health, and it is a dying man, who looks around and asks for how long can he enjoy his money. He may not remember much of the Gospel, but one phrase will haunt his memory : " Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee." (Luke xii. 20.) But for most of us, when we neglect, it is for sensuality, or sloth, or some little dishonest gain, or to give vent to our temper, or indulge in evil desires—these are our idols, and we prefer them to God ! " To whom have you likened Me and made Me equal, and compared Me

and made Me like ?" says the Almighty by His prophet. (Isaias xlvi. 5.)

Though most of us begin to neglect only in little things, let us not deceive ourselves ; we shall not stop at that. Why should we fall further ? Because God's grace is withdrawn. The graces we have neglected are offered to others. In the Gospel, when the first made excuse, were they not passed by and others invited ?

We shall not stop at little things, because we get used to sin, and think less of it. One moment's glance into our past lives shows us that. What would have terrified us some years back are now the daily occurrences of a careless life. Ay, as the Scripture says : " He has blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart." (John xii. 40.)

These are the effects of indifference and neglect. We fall, and fall into what ? Mortal sin. We are weakened by the withdrawal of grace ; too irresolute to make an effort, we fall into mortal sin. That, neglected, soon becomes a habit of sin. That, too, is neglected. We will put things right some time, next Easter, next mission ; but these opportunities are neglected too. And the end comes, far sooner than we thought, and we have not time, nor the will, nor the grace ; and we fall under the judgment of God. For we have neglected.

Do not draw back and say : " I am carrying things too far." No, indeed. For look : is there a Catholic, who is now lost for ever, who intended to be lost ? Are there not many among the condemned, who once were better than we are this day ? They were baptized and instructed, and made their first Communion, and went regularly for years, perhaps ; and then what was it ? A bad book or a bad companion ? or only lazi-

ness, or disliking the priest, or having to leave home for work? Whatever it was, it was only a little change at first; "but they neglected." But they never meant or intended to fall as they did.

If our angel guardians had this day to give an account of us to our Divine Master, would they have to say in the words of the Gospel: "Behold, we have invited them, called them, but they neglected"? If our poor angel would be compelled to say this, let us examine what would have been the cause of our ruin. Each of us has something which, if not restrained and kept in hand, would lead us into sin. Contrast this something —the burden of our confessions, whatever it may be— contrast this something with what we are neglecting for its sake! A peaceful life here and the kingdom of heaven hereafter. And contrast it with Whom we are neglecting for its sake and at its bidding? Our heavenly Father, Who has loved us so much; our Blessed Redeemer, Who died for us, and left us Himself in the Blessed Sacrament, Whose Sacred Heart now is yearning to make friends with us, and fill us with the fire of His Divine Love! My brethren, after all, shall it be said to us: "But they neglected"?

Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost

REMEMBRANCE OF DEATH

"Redeeming the time, for the days are evil."—Eph. v. 16.

1. We have to make amends for the past, to be careful for the future.
2. Remembrance of death will make us do this.
3. Our mistake, we fear death instead of sin.
4. Whereas the thought of death makes us repent of the past, see the vanity of the world, nerves us to do our best.

On time depends eternity. On the manner in which we spend our lifetime depends our happiness or our misery for ever. So to spend our time well is no small or unimportant thing. In fact, it would be a great lesson to learn how to "redeem the time"—that is, to make amends for the past, to be careful for the future.

It is not a lesson you will care to learn. But, though it is a lesson that no one likes, it is the best means, the only means, to a necessary end.

The Holy Spirit teaches it; the Saints teach it; common-sense teaches it. We cannot help ourselves; we must learn it. What, then, do they teach us?

The inspired Word tells us: "In all thy works remember thy last end, and thou shalt never sin." (Ecclus. vii. 40.) And the whole practice of the saints may be summed up in those oft-repeated words of

St. Benedict : " Day after day, keep death before your eyes." And common-sense ? Does it not tell us that, when an important action must be done, and done only once, we must prepare to do it well ? There is no point in which the folly of men is more apparent, than their disregard and even careful shunning of the thought of death. It is folly to act, through mere cowardice, in direct opposition to the counsels of God, the saints, and reason.

Now, my dear brethren, though it is natural to wish to shun the thought of death, we do not come to the Church to do what is natural, but, by the help of grace, what is supernatural ; not what flesh and blood, but what God would have us do. So let us here examine what reasons we have to fear death.

We fear two kinds of things—those that may deprive us of good, and those that may afflict us with evil. Let us see whether death does either. Deprive us of good. It can separate us from this world, deprive us of the pleasures of this bright and happy world. But is it so bright and happy ? Do not most of us have more sorrows than joys ? What with all the labour, sickness, false friends, disappointments of this world, is it so very hard to leave it ? Oh ! it is not the leaving this world merely, but the going we know not whither, that frightens us and makes us fear death. Then it is the second reason ; but with what evil can it afflict us ? None ; death is simply a gateway. It opens heaven to the good, but, alas ! hell to the wicked. It is not death, then, that we should fear, but sin. " For the wages of sin is death," St. Paul says (Rom. vi. 23) ; and again, " The sting of death is sin." (1 Cor. vi. 56.) And St. James : " Sin, when it is completed, begetteth death." (James i. 15.)

So here we have at last the real reason why we fear death—because we are in sin. Oh, the craftiness of the evil one! He has clothed death with all the horror and dread, wherewith he should have clothed sin—mortal sin—and he has decked out sin in the stolen garments of innocence and pleasure. So we have no fear of sin, the real cause of all misery, but foolishly dread the thought of death, which, instead of being an evil, is the great means to help us to heaven.

For regard the advantages of remembering death. It makes us see the past in its true light, and the consequence is repentance.

The past! How much is contained in that one word! How many errors, frailties, deeds of malice and perversity; how many wanderings from God, fixing our heart upon anything rather than on Him! Look at our sins; which one of them should we have dared to commit, if Death had been standing by? The sinful past is what it is, because we did not remember death. And now, when we begin to think of death, we are led to repent.

Death, secondly, teaches us the value of all things here below. Vanity of vanities! Death opens our eyes to see through the hollow pleasures of the world, and the ways and deeds of bad companions.

And the third advantage of the thought of death is that it nerves us with a new energy, and puts us on the way to God. It is hard to go on always doing little things well; that makes the monotony, the weariness of a good life. Remember death. Little things look important, and they are so, viewed in the light of death. How many, after starting on the right road, on the narrow path of a good life, have yet become discouraged and wearied, have sat down and slept?

Why? They forgot to remember death. Let us not do the same. But when we are weary and well-nigh spent, we must think of death. And the end of the road will seem much nearer, and perseverance will be ours. The best means to make us redeem the past, be careful in the present, and anxious for the future is the continual remembrance of death. Have death ever before your eyes.

See, then, under what a mistake and a delusion of the devil we have been labouring. We thought death was to be feared, whereas it is sin; for sin robs us of the Supreme Good, and afflicts us with the evil of eternal punishment. Get free from sin, and you will not fear death. Death has few terrors for a good conscience. Rather shall we find the remembrance of it a cause of comfort. It will be to us a true friend. It is no flatterer or deceiver. It will not play us false at the end. No; cherish the remembrance of death now; make it the guide of your life now, and it will prove to be the gate of heaven.

Twenty-first Sunday after Pentecost

FORGIVE AND BE FORGIVEN

"Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all."—MATT. xviii. 26.

1. The lesson of the parable: forgive and be forgiven.
2. What we owe God. Can we repay it? Not of ourselves.
3. But if we forgive others, God will forgive us.
4. He even gives us the means to pay Him all, through the merits of His Precious Blood.

VERY evidently, my dear brethren, in this parable, it is God, Who is the Master, and we ourselves the servants, who owe Him so much. And payment must be made. No wonder we cry out: "Have patience with me."

We cannot mean this as a complaint, for God has been patient and longsuffering with us, as all our lives testify. No, these words are not a complaint, but a humble prayer that we may have another chance to try and pay. But then we are confronted with those other words: "Pay Thee all!" All? Of ourselves it would be impossible in an eternity to pay God all! For what is there that we do not owe Him? All that we are, all that we have, all that we can do, is from Him. The light of our eyes is from Him; the voice we praise Him with, the hands we lift to Him in prayer, the heart that should love Him—all are God's. Our health, comforts, hopes, happiness—all from God.

Our soul—yes, created by Him, redeemed by Him, and many and many a time raised to life again by God's grace. No wonder the debt we owe God is so overwhelming ; for every time that we have grievously sinned, we have handed over the soul that God has given us to the devil, and God had to purchase it, time after time, with His Most Precious Blood. Pay Him all, indeed—all that He has given us, all that He has done for us ? How can it be done ?

There are two things to be done, and then, please God, the payment will be made.

The first we learn from the servant in the Gospel. Not that he did it ; no, he did the very opposite, and brought ruin upon himself. He would not forgive his fellow-servant. That was his ruin. His master had forgiven him his heavy debt simply for being asked, but when he learned the treatment that the fellow-servant had received, "his lord called him and said to him, Thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all the debt, because thou besoughtest me : shouldst not thou, then, have had compassion also on thy fellow-servant, even as I had compassion on thee ? And his lord being angry delivered him to the torturers." (Matt. xviii. 32-34.)

This is a lesson that we must not shirk. How many a seemingly good person ruins his soul by this want of forgiveness ! Who is there that has not someone who provokes him not to forgive ? Yet, whatever offence he has given, what is it to the debt—the accumulation of offences—that we owe the Lord ? We must forgive, if we expect forgiveness. Nothing else will do. This is the first necessity ; we must forgive.

And remember what led up to our Blessed Lord's speaking this parable. It was St. Peter's question :

"Lord, how often shall my brother offend against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith to him, I say not to thee, till seven times, but to seventy times seven times." (Matt. xviii. 21, 22.) And our Lord proceeded with the parable of the Gospel of the day. This duty, then, is so plain, so necessary, that no one can find the least loophole of evasion or excuse. Forgive, or otherwise God will exact the last farthing from you.

And can it be that people—good people, they think themselves—are so foolish, so full of spite, that they will dare to risk their souls and anger Almighty God, rather than forgive their brother for an unkind word, for ill-natured ridicule, for a slight, for words which blazed out in anger, for spreading a malicious report? It may not be easy, but it has to be done. Pray God to soften your hearts, that you may be able to forgive, as you hope to be forgiven. Do not think that piety, mistaken piety it is, my brethren, will do instead of forgiveness. "If, therefore, thou offer thy gift at the altar, and there thou remember that thy brother hath anything against thee, leave there thy offering before the altar, and go first to be reconciled to thy brother." (Matt. v. 23, 24.)

And this leads us, my dear brethren, to the second thing that we must do—to pay God all. First forgive, and then come to the altar. Yes, through God's merciful goodness, there is an offering we can make, day after day, at the altar, that pays God all. God allows us, wishes us, commands us to make that offering to His own Divine Majesty.

That offering is the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, and He offers Himself on the altar, as He did on the cross, to pay God all. What a privilege for us sinners

to gather round the altar, and, with the riches of our Saviour's merits, pay God all we owe Him. We offer it first to God's honour and glory. We have forgotten it so often, degraded it by our own self-seeking ; but at the Blessed Mass we make amends—all honour and glory be to the Almighty through Jesus Christ our Lord. And then we offer Him full and worthy thanks for all His mercies and graces, to make up for the thoughtlessness and ingratitude of our daily lives. Then we offer the Sacred Victim " for the remission of sins "—our own, those we have caused others to commit, for all poor sinners, and for the souls in purgatory. And then, like children round our Father's table, we ask Him for the daily bread of strength and blessing and virtues that we need.

Can one be kneeling there at the altar who bears enmity to another ? Can there be hatred there, and Jesus so near ? Forgive, and pray to be forgiven. And thank our heavenly Father that we have the means, and may we use it gratefully—the Holy Mass—by which we pay Him all.

Twenty-second Sunday after Pentecost

THE CARE OF OUR SOULS

"To God the things that are God's."—MATT. xxii. 21.

1. Our Lord's answer proved His loyalty to Cæsar, but their disloyalty to God.
2. All we have is God's.
3. When do we render our service ?
4. How much more service to folly and sin.
5. Learn from care of the body to take care of the soul ; food, clothing, medicine.

THE answer of Our Blessed Lord to the Pharisees, tempting Him to speak disloyally of Cæsar, is full of wisdom, which grows upon us as we think of it. He easily confutes their wiles, simply by saying : "Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's," but He added, "And to God the things that are God's." Which of us can say we are the faithful servant who has done that ?

"The things that are God's ?" What have we that is not from God ? He has given us our living body with its faculties and senses, our will, memory, and understanding, our immortal soul made after His own image and likeness. And when we have defiled and ruined this soul, He has given us a plenteous Redemption, His Sacraments, His Church, the title-deeds of Heaven.

And we have to render service to God with all and

for all these favours and graces. That is the work of our life. We have to know Him, love Him, serve Him. Our mind and heart and soul to be all His. Our whole being to be impregnated with this one thought, "All for God, and God alone."

And when do we do all this? What a humiliation to own it! To Him, Who gives us our lives, we render one short hour or half-hour on a Sunday, even if we are regular at that. We render Him two or three minutes at night; but, perhaps, in our hurry, only the sign of the cross in the morning! And our thoughts and affections? Alas! many a time, for a day together, not one thought of Heaven, or the cross, or the tabernacle. And even when we do pray, do we render homage to Him with heart and soul, though it is He, Who gave us our heart and soul wherewith to love Him?

How can we account for it that so many of us are like this? We do not mean to rebel against God. We know our duty. Every child can answer rightly, "Of which must you take most care, of your body or of your soul?" "Of my soul." To see still more plainly how little we do for God contrast it with the waste of time, and the interest, love, and labour squandered over things that are useless. Let Cæsar stand for the devil, the world, the flesh, our predominant passion, and what have they all given to you? Render to them what they have bestowed upon you. But do not steal and give to them God's time, that He has given you, and God's other gifts, your will and memory, your heart, your precious immortal soul itself!

Alas! that is what so many do. Half an hour's Mass a week begrudged to God; to our passions and pleasures and greed, six days a week, long and late hours are not

enough! We steal most of the Sunday, the Lord's Day, from Him too. To pray, to raise up our minds and hearts to God, we find dry and monotonous and weary; but to gossip, to indulge in idle and often filthy talk, long hours seem only minutes; closing-time in the public-house comes all too soon, but the shortest of sermons we find too long in the house of God.

And is it true that we, with our intelligence, our faith, our immortal souls, have so demeaned ourselves as to be content with such a foolish, sinful life? Money, or drink, or pride, or envy, or unholy love—are these the idols that we have set up? Are we to render to them our life and our very souls?

Enough of this, my dear brethren, we are ashamed of having thus been led astray from Almighty God, and wasting His precious gifts.

Let us be practical. Our soul is the centre of all God's gifts and blessings to us. If we save our soul we do indeed "render to God the things that are God's." How, then, can we make sure of that? We must take care of it; it is precious and immortal.

We are clever enough about our bodies, let us take a lesson from the care we bestow upon them. What are the chief cares we bestow upon our bodies? Food, clothing, and medicine when we ail. And what thought we give to these things, how anxious we are about them. When we mention food we include drink, and to indulge in that and in high living, to gratify the appetite and lust of one man, how many a family has been ruined and how many children made destitute!

And clothing; it is right to be well clothed, but think of the hours spent through vanity in devising, the heart-burnings and jealousies, the debts and petty thefts, all incurred for fine clothes.

And medicine and care when sickness comes upon us. What pain and operations will men undergo even for appearance's sake, let alone to stretch out the little span of life.

Contrast, then, the body, my dear brethren, cared for so anxiously, and our immortal soul, that we let starve, and go naked before the eyes of God, and let die and rot in sin, and the heavenly Physician only waiting to be asked, and our soul would be healed!

Yes, the food of our soul is holy prayer, that brings down the manna of grace to feed our soul. And the food above all, without cost or price, is the Blessed Sacrament of the altar. Here in our Father's house the table is always laid, the cloth spread, the heavenly Bread ready for the children, if they would only come. Starved like the prodigal, yet no, they will not come where there is bread enough and to spare.

And our souls are naked too, and we care not. Good works and virtuous actions are the clothing of the soul, and God's grace a garment. And our souls are sick unto death. Here is the tribunal of Penance, and there we know we can be healed. The good Lord is waiting for us to come and be healed. And how many will not.

"To God the things that are God's." And are we keeping our poor soul back from God? Starving it, letting it go naked, watching it dying, and never seeking a remedy? The care, that we have lavished on our body, will condemn us at the Judgment, contrasted with the want of care, the neglect of our souls. That soul is God's, created by Him, purchased by Him with His Blood; then cherish it and love it, and loyally render it back to Him, Who gave it to you.

Twenty-third Sunday after Pentecost

GOOD DISPOSITIONS

"If I shall touch only His garment, I shall be healed."—MATT. ix. 21.

1. Narrative of the miracle.
2. There was love, power, and nearness enough for Christ to cure all.
3. Why the miracle on the woman? Because she had good dispositions; she was conscious of her disease, made an effort to be cured; had faith and trust in Christ.

THE miracle of the woman, who touched the hem of Christ's garment, is narrated three times in the Gospels. Evidently, then, there is some special lesson in it that we should learn. Putting the accounts of Saints Matthew, Mark, and Luke together, the narrative is this.

Jairus, a ruler in the synagogue, came and fell at our Lord's feet, and besought Him to come to his daughter, who was at the point of death. "And He went with him, and a great multitude followed, and they thronged Him." (Mark v. 24.) And in that crowd was a poor woman, who had been troubled with an issue of blood for twelve years, "and had suffered many things from physicians, and had spent all that she had, who came behind Him in the crowd and touched the hem of His garment." "If I shall touch only His garment I shall be healed." And Jesus

stopped and said: "Who is it that touched Me?" And all denying, Peter and they that were with Him, said: "Master, the multitude throng and press Thee, and dost Thou say, Who touched Me?" And Jesus said: "Somebody hath touched Me, for I know that virtue has gone out of Me." And the woman, seeing she was not hid, came trembling, and fell down before His feet, and declared before all the people for what cause she had touched Him, and how she was immediately healed. But He said to her: "Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole, go thy way in peace." (Luke viii. 45-48.)

Picture that crowd—Jesus going to the dying girl, that poor woman, as a last chance of remedy, creeping up behind Him, and touching His garment.

Now there was love, nearness, and power enough in Christ for all that crowd to have been healed. There was no miracle worked on the others, but there was on that poor woman on account of her dispositions.

There are crowds often in our churches, and He, the same Master, is here, and there is love enough in Him, Who dwells in the Tabernacle, and power enough, and we are all near enough to speak to Him, and not only to touch His garment, but to receive His sacred Body and Blood—and why is there no miracle of mercy worked on us? Why are we no better than we are?

For want of the proper dispositions. That woman was conscious of her disease; she had been trying to be cured for twelve years.

She had faith in Christ. Humble faith—"If I shall touch only His garment I shall be healed."

And she made an effort to approach Him. Think

how everything was against her. There was a crowd that thronged Him, and she was the weakest in the crowd, and yet she worked her way to get to Him. She was, according to the law of Moses, the vilest in the crowd, her touch was pollution, but she worked her way, in spite of disdainful looks at her poor bent form.

Her coming was most ill-timed, for Jesus was on His way to heal the daughter of Jairus, who was at the point of death. And the eager father and the crowd were hurrying along. Yet she managed to do what she was longing for ; she touched the hem of His garment, and she was healed.

Contrast ourselves with that poor woman, and what can we say ? Do we deserve a blessing from God at all, for where are our dispositions ?

There are diseases troubling our souls, perhaps for longer than twelve years. And are we anxious for them to be cured ? If we are not humble and fearful about the state of our souls, our danger is great. Let us pray that our eyes may be opened to see ourselves as we are in the sight of God. His verdict now may be, "Thou knowest not ; thou art wretched and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked . . . be zealous and do penance." (Apoc. iii. 17-19.)

And if she had faith in Christ, that He could and would heal her, how much more faith and confidence should we not have, who know our Lord so well ?

And the effort she made disgraces us in our tepidity and sloth. But we must make an effort ! There is a crowd round our souls—past sins, worldly desires, unholy friends, the evil, tempting spirits—and we have to work our way through them to come to Jesus. She had to come publicly ; we can go to confession

easily and secretly. Her coming was ill-timed. She delayed our Lord, and even as He spoke to her, word came that the girl was dead. But for us, Jesus is waiting, perhaps has been waiting in the Home of His Love for years.

Such were the dispositions of this afflicted woman, that earned the working of the miracle. She was conscious of her infirmity, and longed to be free from it. She had full faith in the power and love of Christ to heal her. She had the goodwill and earnestness to make the effort to get near Him. Nothing kept her back—neither the crowd, nor her weakness, nor the hurry of our Lord.

Let us try to imitate her. Let our prayer be: "Open our eyes, dear Lord, to see how much we need Thee; to see the dangerous state of our soul; to see how the rescue could be made so easily; for Thou art loving, and powerful, and near us. Oh, if we were only longing, and anxious to be saved! Give us, then, the dispositions that touched Thee in this poor woman's case—to be conscious of our misery and sin; to have faith in Thy power and love; the goodwill to make the effort to approach Thee." "If I shall touch only His garment, I shall be healed."

Twenty-fourth Sunday after Pentecost

PERSEVERANCE

"He that shall persevere unto the end, he shall be saved." —MATT. x. 22.

1. Natural to be unstable and changeable.
2. Therefore perseverance is supernatural, and has to be acquired by fidelity, fervour, daily prayer.
3. The dangers against persevering are weariness, tepidity, and neglect of prayer.

EVERYTHING depends, my dear brethren, on perseverance. No amount of piety and good deeds will avail us, unless there is perseverance. We know it is difficult to persevere ; we know many fail in it ; therefore it is a most important thing for us to learn how to persevere, and so be saved.

It is only human nature for us to be changeable and unstable ; to weary of a thing ; to lose heart and give up the endeavour. If this is natural, then, perseverance is supernatural—a grace from God, that we must learn how to acquire and cling to.

There are three chief means to help us to persevere—fidelity, fervour, and daily prayer.

Fidelity is a daily practice of carefulness and exactitude, mostly in small matters, from a sense of duty. Most people can be roused up to make one great effort ; how few are found, who are conscientious enough and

have command over themselves sufficiently, to be careful and strict in details day after day? A church can be crowded at a mission; how few at the end of twelve months have been faithful to their good resolutions! Laxity in small things creeps in; the firmness of the will is fretted and worn away. How natural! Why, the very rocks are worn away by the waves, and even by the salt sea breezes! Then pleasure and attractions claim too much of our time and our thoughts; our soul becomes entangled in the web, and very soon we are helpless if tempted; we are only waiting for a fall. We see others, not half as careful; why should we be so strict, and always on duty and on guard? Oh, the weariness of well-doing! It is the little things, that chafe and gall us, poor footsore pilgrims on the way to heaven!

No one makes a journey shorter by continually thinking how long it is, and how much more is to come. It is a mistake to do this. You are not strong enough now to persevere and be faithful for years; your duty is to persevere to-day! Do not crowd a life's work into the anxious hours of one day. "Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof." (Matt. vi. 34.) Do not forecast twenty or thirty or fifty years more of work. The Master may call you this night. "Watch ye, therefore, because you know not what hour your Lord will come." (Matt. xxiv. 42.)

The great secret of fidelity is fresh beginnings. Let every day find us fresh and cheerful on the road, with a good will to please God that day.

And the second means will help us greatly in this daily endeavour. Fervour is a constant earnestness of the will. This fervour is sustained by a personal love of Jesus Christ our Lord. His coming on earth, to

make Himself known to us and loved, has made the way to heaven so much easier. He is the way, the truth, and the life. There is no fear in our hearts of wandering and being lost ; no doubt, no hesitation, for we have the truth ; no languor, no weariness unto death, for the life is with us. The remembrance of our Blessed Saviour's love and care of us should arouse us to constancy and self-sacrifice.

But there is something more than love that should make us fervent : there is the poignant regret, that we have slighted that love so often. Sorrow for our lapses and betrayals, daily sorrow—" My sin is always before me." (Ps. l. 4.)—growing and ripening into true compunction, is the power that keeps us fervent in the service of the Master. Compunction reconciles us to God, unites our will to the will of Christ our Lord, and in that union it is inflamed and invigorated, so that it is a joy even to press on, persevering day by day.

This sorrow will keep us humble too, and so prevent us falling into tepidity, the enemy, the ruin of holy fervour. Tepidity is not the sin of bad people, but the blight, that comes over good people. The bloom on the fruit-trees may promise well, and yet no fruit that year. Why ? A blight came, and did its work. Tepidity steals over the soul. Pious practices are languidly performed, then gradually omitted. The good intention to do all for God is forgotten. Tepidity is most dangerous. A blindness comes over our soul, germs of deadly sin are engrafted, and it provokes Almighty God to anger. " I would that thou wert cold or hot, but because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will begin to vomit thee out of my mouth." (Apoc. iii. 15, 16.) " Be zealous " is the

angel's warning given us. So, besides fidelity, fervour is most requisite, if we would persevere.

The third help is the practice of daily prayer. We have seen that fidelity is a daily work, a daily habit, and to find strength for it, we have to turn to daily prayer. It is presumption to count on final perseverance, as if we had merited it. Regard it thus: daily perseverance the reward of daily prayer.

The enemy lurking here is neglect of prayer. Human nature finds constant prayer more than it can stand; and we seem no better than others, who take life easily. Listen not to such temptations. As you love your own souls, be faithful in daily prayer, and let your prayer be, "Lord, that I may persevere."

Pray, too, for this very gift of prayer; God loves to be asked. "If you ask the Father anything in My Name, He will give it you. . . . Ask and you shall receive." (John xvi. 23, 24.) We do now, dear Lord; we ask for that, which we cannot have without. We cannot be saved without final perseverance. We cannot persevere of our own selves. So we ask Thee for the fidelity, fervour, habit of daily prayer, that will enable us to persevere to the end. Grant us the grace to fulfil Thy command: "Be thou faithful unto death: and I will give thee the crown of life." (Apoc. ii. 10.)

The Immaculate Conception

"Hail, full of grace."—Luke i. 28.

1. The Immaculate Conception always believed.
2. Yet a recent Article of Faith. Why decreed? To defend the dignity of Mary, to rebuke the world, to strengthen weak Catholics.
3. Reason why Mary was Immaculate. Becoming to Blessed Trinity, to Blessed Sacrament, to Calvary, to Angels and Saints in heaven.
4. Mary refers the glory to God.
5. Loves to be invoked, "Conceived without sin."

From Apostolic times the Church has always believed in the sinless Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Even non-Catholics note this as a Festival day. Witness the Book of Common Prayer, the Protestant authority, and Whitaker's Almanack to represent the world. "December 8: Conception B.V.M." Ah! yes, they answer, but not Immaculate! True, but if it was a sinful conception, with the original stain upon Mary, how could it be observed as a Festival? They must have considered it a sinless conception, or they could not have kept its memory holy.

Yet, though an ancient Festival, it is pre-eminently a modern one. For in the year 1854 Pope Pius IX. declared it to be a doctrine of faith, that Mary was conceived without sin.

Why was it decreed and made an Article of Faith? First, to defend the dignity of Mary. As long as her

sinlessness was not assailed, it sufficed to leave the pious belief a matter of devotion. When the wickedness of the world grew bolder, and knew no reverence for Mary, then the Church spoke out by the voice of the Sovereign Pontiff, and the Immaculate Conception was declared to be of Faith.

The second reason was to rebuke the world, grown material, gross, licentious, which can believe in nothing purer than itself. And the Church was not afraid to declare this dogma, which if anyone denies he is anathema.

And, thirdly, to necessitate weak-kneed Catholics to have the courage to stand up boldly in defence of their Immaculate Mother. As long as it was optional to believe it or not, such Catholics could compromise with the sneers of the world, but from the day of the Declaration, they knew they had to believe and profess the Immaculate Conception, or else they had made shipwreck of the Faith.

Though we, my dear brethren, believe in the Immaculate Conception on the authoritative word of the Church, it is good for us to recall to mind the reason why our Lady was Immaculate.

How much has been written on this subject! There are countless reasons and proofs, but as far as our devotion needs, they can be summed up in one word. "It was becoming." It was right, just, seemly for Mary to be Immaculate!

For the honour of the Blessed Trinity! Daughter of the Heavenly Father, Spouse of the Holy Ghost, Mother of the Son! how could the most pure God ally Himself to anything that sin had sullied?

For the honour of the most Blessed Sacrament! We say, "Hail, true Body born of the Virgin Mary."

And is it not repugnant that the Lamb of God, the spotless Victim of the altar, was born of a sinner ?

Calvary tells us, too, that Mary must have been Immaculate ! Standing by the cross, and, later, with the dead Body of Her Son laid on her lap, how could she have looked upon those wounds if she, by sin, had caused even one of them ? What sustained that anguished heart ? How could she have co-operated in our Redemption, if she had not been Immaculate ?

Heaven cries out, too, " Mary Immaculate." For how could she be Queen of Heaven, if she did not transcend all the blessed Spirits there in holiness ? Michael, Gabriel, Raphael, and the angelic hosts call her Queen and pay her reverence, and their holiness has never been tarnished with the stain of sin. And all the Saints of God, redeemed by her Divine Son, vie with each other in the love and reverence for the spotless Maid, now their Queen. Purer than all, fairer than all, is the soul of Mary, the Immaculate Virgin Mother of God !

Are we making too much of Mary ? In a Protestant country we so often hear that complaint that, unknowingly, we fear and wonder, and even draw back from honouring our Blessed Mother. Why had she to be Immaculate ? Because she was chosen to be the Mother of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, our Lord and Saviour. For His sake were the privilege and the honour given. So the glory of the Mother redounds to the glory of Her Divine Son.

This singular and unique privilege is, indeed, the special glory of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Nevertheless she does not claim the glory as her own, but in her Canticle she says : " For He that is mighty hath done great things to me, and holy is His Name." (Luke i. 49.)

But, though referring the glory to the goodness of God, there is no invocation goes straighter to the heart of Mary, and pleases her more, than "Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us, who have recourse to thee." That prayer professes the faith, gives her the glory, implores her help, and expresses our confidence in her—all in those few words. Use that prayer continually, let it live in our hearts ready to burst from our lips, and it will be well with us at the end.

Sometimes, when we think of the spotless purity and exalted glory of Mary in heaven, we feel abashed, and fear that her very greatness makes a gulf between us. Who are we that she should listen to, think of, or pray for us? Yes, we are sinners, who have been so fickle and false so very often, that perhaps we have worn out her patience and her pity.

This is a temptation, and we must never give in to such a thought against Mary Immaculate. Is she not the Mother of the Saviour of poor sinners? And her spotlessness makes her realize sin all the more, and be more filled with pity for us, poor sinners, that call upon her. Her joy is to be the refuge of sinners amidst us all, and yet unsullied. If we would not only pray to her, but, for her sake, be sorry for the past, keep out of sin, live clean lives for the time to come; it would be a glory to her, and she would be proud of her children. And it would be easy too. The great Queen of Heaven, Mary Immaculate, is our Mother too. There has never been one lost, whom she has disdained or repulsed; there has never been one lost, who has persevered to the end in prayer to her. 'Oh, Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us, who have recourse to thee."

The Patronage of St. Joseph

"I will praise Thy Name, for Thou hast been to me a Helper and a Protector."—From the Office of St. Joseph.

1. God's doing that St. Joseph is remembered.
2. His titles: Spouse of Mary, Foster-father of Jesus, Protector of the Church.
3. The secrets of his holiness: obedience to the Will of God, a pure intention, union with Jesus and Mary.
4. Why devotion to St. Joseph most useful and fruitful.

It would be a mystery to the world, if it ever thought of it, how the name and fame of St. Joseph should have lived and spread and intensified through all these centuries of time. A poor village carpenter, living in quietude and obscurity, how and why should he be remembered? He was no leader of the people, no preacher of the glad tidings, no miracle did he ever work, that we know of. And yet now, in the twentieth century, whose name is more honoured, is more frequently joined to the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary, than that of Joseph?

What are his titles, his claims to our reverence and devotion? The chaste spouse of the Immaculate Virgin Mary, Mother of God, the faithful guardian and Foster-father of Jesus, the Protector of the Universal Church! This glorious title was given to him in our own days by the Pope. The ways of God are not like the ways of men. God chose the weak and poor,

the obscure and unknown, and placed him in these positions of trust and honour, and he was found the faithful man.

It is a joy to us thus to honour St. Joseph, but it is much more important for us to learn how he became worthy of it all, and then to seek his help to imitate him. We might excuse ourselves from imitating St. Paul in his strenuous labours, the martyrs in their sufferings, but who cannot try to imitate the quiet, uneventful, peaceful life of St. Joseph?

What is the secret of his holiness? In his sorrows and anxieties, obedience to God was his safeguard. What a contrast to ourselves! No self-seeking, no murmuring, no excuses. Simply prompt obedience without a word. The Angel awakened him in his sleep with the word, "Arise, and take the Child and its Mother, and fly into Egypt, and be there until I shall tell thee." (Matt. ii. 13.) And it was done. God knew best. Joseph meekly obeyed, saying in his heart, "Blessed be the Will of God."

In his daily life at Nazareth of poverty and toil, what was the secret that sanctified that simple monotony of daily toil, that humble obscurity? What made it so precious in the sight of God that the Saviour, out of His thirty-three years, lived that quiet life with Mary and Joseph for thirty?

It is a pure intention. He did all and everything for the love and glory of God. We cannot ever hope to emulate this union with Jesus and Mary, but we can humble ourselves by contrasting His pure life—all for Jesus—with our own, all for ourselves. Ours, for the most part, is wasted and spoiled, because we have forgotten God, and aimed only to please ourselves, doing what we liked, seeking what was pleasant,

shirking that which hurt us or offended. We have been like those of whom our Lord said, "Amen I say to you, they have received their reward." (Matt. vi. 2.) We must reverse all this if we would imitate St. Joseph. The same ordinary lives, the same toil, same poverty, same monotony, but the motive, the intention changes it all. When the mist rises and the sun smiles upon the earth—it is the same surroundings indeed, the trees were there, and the meadows and the mountains in the distance, but they were all enveloped in the mist; they needed the sun to bring them out, to reveal the joyous landscape before us. So of our lives exactly. There is the same work, and long hours, and hard fare, and the daily repetition for years. But our life is befogged; sinfulness, selfishness, repinings, forgetfulness of God, neglect of prayer, hang like a poisonous vapour over all. Whereas over a good life, over St. Joseph's life pre-eminently, heavenly sunshine plays, the beaming light of God's approval, because every day, and every hour, and every work is all for Him. His honour and glory, to please Him, to show love to Him—that is the beginning and end of all.

Make a pure intention to do all for the love of God, to take all with an equable mind from the hand of God. "All for Jesus." "Welcome be the Will of God" are the thoughts, that should be ever present in our souls. Pray for that spirit, and St. Joseph will help you, and soon you will see the difference in your lives. You will feel that the clouds of winter have passed, and the sunshine of God's blessing and approval is warming your souls.

Thus we see that obedience to God's Will, and union with God by a pure intention, are the secrets of St. Joseph's holy life.

And the secret of his happy death is similar. He was always with Jesus and Mary. As he lived so he died—with them, Mary tending him, Jesus, the Saviour, strengthening his departing soul. We all pray to St. Joseph for a holy death. Imitate him, as well as pray to him. Keep near Jesus and Mary in life, and a holy death will be yours. They are faithful, and will not desert their friends. If by prayer, and love, and a life of piety you keep near them now, you will be found in their company when death comes. But the careless and negligent, those whose heart is far from them all through life, how can they expect to be found in that blessed company when they come to die ?

In conclusion, let us think of the consolation there is in being devout to St. Joseph. God loves to hear his prayers. God is pleased to grant favours through the intercession of St. Joseph. St. Teresa tells us that she never asked for anything through St. Joseph, that she did not obtain. And why does it please God to do St. Joseph honour ? To make up to him for the poverty, the anxieties, the obedience, the splendid fidelity of that life at Nazareth! He was nothing thought of then, he is honoured now throughout God's holy Church. He had no friends then ; he has countless devout clients now. His home was a poor little cottage then ; he has countless statues, altars, churches dedicated to him now. He worked no wonders on earth ; countless miracles have since testified to those, who pray to him, that his intercession now is all-powerful with God. What a consolation, what a safeguard to us, to be devout to Joseph. "I will praise Thy name, for Thou hast been to me a Helper and a Protector."

The Annunciation

"Behold the Handmaid of the Lord."—LUKE i. 38.

1. The great act of humility, faith, and obedience.
2. Enabled Mary to understand Bethlehem, to be brave on Calvary.
3. "The Handmaid" the test of orthodoxy.
4. "The Handmaid" the object of devotion.
5. Trials and storms, but with the revival of religion, more public devotion to Mary than ever.

How sweetly these words sounded, my dear brethren, as they rose from the lips of our Lady, and were heard, in the hush of heaven, by the Almighty Father! The grandest act of humility, faith, and obedience that had ever risen from this earth. They are the keynote of Mary's life, they re-echo in the history of the Church, they have pulsated in the heart of every devout Catholic, schooling himself to say, "God's Holy Will be done."

Gabriel gave his message and received the triumphant answer on this day of the Annunciation. To what trials of faith was Mary exposed, and yet overcame them all by these blessed words of hers: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord."

What more unlike the coming of the Son of the most High, than the birth of that little Child in the stable at Bethlehem? But Mary knew, and pressed Him to her bosom with a whispered "Behold the handmaid of the Lord"—her Child and her God! And during the

long, patient years at Nazareth, in poverty and toil, she never grew weary ; He was there, she was the handmaid. And in her Son's public career she effaced herself ; she was the handmaid, He the Lord. But on Calvary, when others could forsake Him, His Mother stood by the cross, and with heroism ineffable, remembered how she had once said, " Behold the handmaid of the Lord," and He was hers ; and now she had to give Him up to death for us poor sinners. And Mary did.

But her reward came. Years after, when assumed into heaven, she said it once again. The angelic hosts around her, crowned by her Son, the great God in heaven, she would murmur, as she gazed upon Him : " Behold the handmaid of the Lord."

And when the Church grew and expanded, and began to dominate the world, heresies sprung up. The devil, knowing the power that Mary was in the Church, stirred up strife, and the " handmaid " became the subject of controversy. Mary was the test of orthodoxy. Was Mary the handmaid really the Mother of God ? After strife and persecution and loss of life, the fourth General Council decreed it. Mary was the Mother of God, and not only of the Man Christ Jesus. For a thousand years scarcely a word was said against the Holy Eucharist, but all attacks were made against Jesus through Mary. So it has been said of her : " Mary has destroyed all heresies."

Then Mary's position in the Church was assured. The test of the right faith first, and then, naturally, devotion to her sprung up amongst the faithful. Twice had the handmaid given us the Redeemer—at Bethlehem and on Calvary—so then the saying, " All good things come to us through Mary," began to be

understood and prized. Festivals were instituted in her honour to teach the faithful, what they had to know and revere in her life. Churches were built and miraculous shrines multiplied. And her clients included all—the poor and simple, children and the aged, kings and queens, Popes and writers; and as leaders they have such heroes of the Church as St. Jerome, St. Ephrem, St. John of Damascus, St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Anselm of Canterbury, SS. Bernard, Dominic, and Alphonsus.

How Mary was honoured in the ages of Faith, when all Europe was Catholic! But those good days were not to last. There was a storm gathering, and it burst at the Reformation. And in this land of ours—Mary's dowry—the full force of the storm was felt. But how many a good Catholic was staunch and faithful in those dark days of persecution, because he was devout to Mary! She had offered herself. "Behold the handmaid," though Calvary was to follow on; and so would he, with Mary's help, bravely face the worst. "God's holy will be done." If the echoes could waken from the cells and dungeons, that housed those holy ones of God, how Mary's name and prayers to her would sound upon our ears! Mary was with them in their hour of need. But in the churches, when Jesus was turned out, when the Tabernacle was broken open, there was no room for Mary. Her statues, shrines, and altars were desecrated too. The handmaid followed the Lord.

Those times are past; we live in happier days. The glory is not revived. The minsters and the ruined abbeys tell us that. But humble and unassuming churches and chapels are being multiplied, and convent homes springing up once again, and priests

walking the streets, with the freedom of Englishmen. And with all this, and causing all this, is devotion to the handmaid of the Lord. Devotion to Our Lady was never so general, so insisted on by Pope after Pope, as in these, our own days. Some fifty years ago, the dogma of the Immaculate Conception was declared an article of faith. The older ones can look back and praise God for the growth of the May devotions. The miracles at Lourdes have attracted countless thousands to Mary's grotto. The October rosaries, all over the wide, wide world, have voiced the praises of the handmaid, "Hail, Mary! full of grace," from a greater multitude, than ever in this world gave glory to God.

So we must be as the rest, devout to Mary. St. Francis Jerome says: "A man can hardly be saved that feels no love for Mary." We have to cling to the Mother, that we may make sure of being near the Son. Devotion to our Blessed Lady is the easiest and the safest way to make us sure of heaven. "Behold the handmaid of the Lord," the model of all virtues, the refuge for all in trouble and distress; the Mother, not only the Mother of God, but our Mother, too, for she accepted us when she lost Him—adopted us when He died for us.

The Sacred Heart

"My son, give Me thy heart."—Prov. xxiii. 26.

1. The seat of religion is the heart.
2. Our heart has to be given freely.
3. What is included in the heart?
4. To whom has it to be given? To Him Who has given us His.
5. The benefits of devotion to the Sacred Heart; more frequent communions, power of example of others, the morning offering.

Religion is on every tongue. There is a great deal of thoughtless talk about it, but it is not the man with the loudest voice, who is the most religious.

No; God is love; and the heart, the seat of love, must play the most important part in religion. We are the children of God, and what is the bond between father and child but love? "My son, give Me thy heart."

Are our relations to God those of children? Some amongst us are rebels, not sons. They have wantonly disobeyed, turned their back upon their God; the Church knows them no more. Sin is their master. Yet even for these God is anxious, and is willing to forgive them.

Others regard God as a task-master. "I know that thou art a hard man," as the idle servant says in the Gospel. (Matt. xxv. 24.) And their religion is like machinery—there is no heart in it. They have business

transactions with God. They pray, attend Church, observe abstinence and the rest, as they pay their rent or their insurance ; but their heart is far from Him.

And the best of us, my dear brethren, who look upon God as a Father, and bless Him for all His kindness and patience, have to acknowledge that it is " prodigal sons !" we have been, not once, but frequently. Who amongst us has never left his Father's house by sin, squandered the grace of God, and only returned when misery and remorse compelled us ? Oh ! if God is not weary of receiving us, let us not grow weary of returning. May we learn to know the blessedness of being the children of God.

And if we want to be children, really and truly, God, in the first place, asks us for our heart. To give it to Him, to offer it a free, voluntary gift. He will not force us, or take it ; it must be given. Think how many times we have given our heart to God—at missions, at Holy Communions, in sickness ! Was it a genuine gift ? If so, how comes it that we have taken it back so often ? A mean thing to do—so mean, that none of us cares to own it.

To give Him our very heart—our love, affection, devotedness—that is the soul of religion. It is because our heart is in it, that our prayer ascends to heaven ; it is because our hearts are in them, that our confessions are contrite and received by God, that our Communions are holocausts. Our heart is the temple of God then ; the sacrifice of ourselves is offered there, all idols driven out, all our heart is God's alone.

Have we finished the little text ? No ; give thy heart to Me. To whom ? The good Saviour, Who first gave us His Heart to win us to Himself. Well has it been said : " A man's own heart must ever be given to gain

the heart of another." Hence we celebrate this glorious festival of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Happy we, who live in the days, when this devotion is doing so much to rekindle the zeal and devotion of men.

The goodness of the heart is shown in deeds. So it was the Sacred Heart that prompted all the kind words and merciful actions of our Blessed Lord; that urged Him to prove His love by His sufferings and His Death. It was the secret of the Sacred Heart all His life, that He would leave us Himself in the Blessed Sacrament, that Mass would be offered, day after day, from the rising to the setting of the sun: the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, the sacrifice for the remission of sins, the sacrifice of Calvary renewed in love.

And in these latter days, when devotion had grown cold, and the Blessed Sacrament was seldom received by the faithful, when the world and its gains and pleasures absorbed men's interest almost entirely, the Sacred Heart revealed Itself as the object of love, veneration, and imitation, to stir up the fire of zeal in the hearts of men. What a sacred conflagration it has caused, extending miraculously over the whole world! Thus the Sacred Heart came "to seek and to save that which was lost." (Luke xix. 10.)

As when He was on earth, so now the reproach is uttered against our Lord. "This Man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them." (Luke xv. 2.) Yea, more: He receiveth sinners, indeed, and graciously gives them His own Body and Blood to be their food. It is frequent Communion, brought about by devotion to the Sacred Heart, that angers the devil, and he causes the hypocritical outcry of the world to be raised against it. Prepare well, and then persevere in fre-

quent Communion. Receive the Bread of Life that you may grow strong in the service of God. "Let us draw near, then, with a true heart, in fulness of faith." (Heb. x. 22.)

And it is not only Communion, that devotion to the Sacred Heart leads to, but to a thorough preparation for it by constant prayer, the meetings at Church, the Benedictions, the mutual help, that example of numbers gives to one another in the League of the Sacred Heart—the apostleship of prayer. The easiest way to be good, to grow more devout, is to be earnest members of that confraternity.

But all life long cannot be communions or visits to the church, and yet love is constant, and wants to be ever with the object loved. Here comes in the influence, the power of the "morning offering," as subtle, as permeating our lives, as the odour of sweet flowers in the sanctuary. "O Jesus, through the most pure heart of Mary, I offer Thee the prayers, work, and sufferings of this day, for all the intentions of Thy Divine Heart." The offering is made; the day is consecrated and accepted by our Blessed Lord. All our prayers and work and sufferings are His. Never take them back by selfishness or sin, but let your desire be that not once a day, but many a time, and every time that unworthy motives or temptations arise, the offering be renewed. The remembrance, the mention of the Holy Name of Jesus, would do it. Union would grow, devotion would grow, and we should soon feel that we were "doing the will of God from the heart." (Ephes. vi. 6.) Listen to our Lord's appeal: "My son, give Me thy heart." He claims it, Who deserves it, for He has given us His own.

SS. Peter and Paul

"Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church." —MATT. xvi. 18.

1. Hope and encouragement for us in this Festival.
2. Peter's faith and faults.
3. Peter transformed by the Holy Spirit, teacher and leader, his work living still.
4. SS. Peter and Paul still powerful, and interested in us.

THIS great Festival, my dear brethren, appeals to our hearts in a most direct manner. SS. Peter and Paul were both so thoroughly human, that we are drawn to them; and both so raised up and transformed by Divine grace, that our hearts too are lifted up with hope and encouragement. Not for a moment do they pose as great as of themselves. No, as St. Paul voices it, "By the grace of God, I am what I am." (1 Cor. xv. 10.)

St. Peter's characteristic virtue was his faith; not a cold, calculating faith, but a lively, impetuous, energetic faith. For instance, when our Blessed Lord asked His disciples, "But whom do you say that I am?" Before the others could open their lips, Peter burst out with that glorious act of faith, "Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God." (Matt. xvi. 16.) And again, when our Lord said, "There are some of you that believe not . . . will you also go away?" Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou

hast the words of eternal life. And we have believed and have known that Thou art Christ, the Son of God." (John vi. 65-70.) Peter, too, because he had faith, was rewarded by the miraculous draught of fish. He said, "At Thy word, I will let down the net." (Luke v. 5.) When the Apostles saw their Master walking on the water, only Peter's faith made him venture to imitate our Lord. Then human nature grew afraid, and he began to sink, but faith burst forth again. "Lord, save me," and the Master's hand was outstretched in help. (Matt. xiv. 30.)

With all this faith Peter had his faults. He was wilful, boastful, headstrong. He once rebuked our Lord, "Lord, be it far from Thee, this shall not be unto Thee." Who, turning, said to Peter, "Go behind Me, Satan, thou art a scandal unto Me." (Matt. xvi. 22, 23.) And he boasted, "I will not deny Thee." "Although all shall be scandalized in Thee, yet not I." And he spoke the more vehemently, "Although I shall die together with Thee, I will not deny Thee." (Mark xiv. 29, 31.) And afterwards in the garden, when he was bidden to pray and watch, he slept. "Watch ye and pray that ye enter not into temptation." (Mark xiv. 38.) He had not prayed, and he went into temptation, trusting to himself, and he fell at the voice of a woman, and denied His Master.

But, my dear brethren, we only recall all this to realize the better the transformation worked by Divine grace. This was Peter of himself; behold him filled with the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. In him we can see that the promises of Christ had been accomplished. The Holy Spirit had revealed all truth to him, opened the Scriptures to him, so that he might explain them, endowed him with the gift of eloquence

and tongues, filled his heart with courage. Naturally Peter, the Rock, took the foremost place, was the spokesman, the representative of his brethren. In his preaching on the day of Pentecost, in his converting thousands that very day, in his bearing the first brunt of persecution, in the marvellous miracles that he wrought, Peter showed himself the Shepherd, the Guardian of the Church. Herod's soldiers and dungeons and chains were powerless against him, over whom, as the head of the Church, Hell itself cannot prevail.

Peter showed his power, and men acknowledged it. Witness his judgment on Ananias, "And the man fell down, and gave up the ghost" (Acts v. 35), and his opening the door of salvation to the Gentiles. "If, then, God gave them the same grace . . . who was I to withstand God?" (Acts xi. 17.) What an insight into the noble heart of Blessed Peter. He remembered what grace had done to him; was he, then, to withhold grace from those who sought it? "Even as he spoke to them the Holy Ghost fell upon them." (*Ibid.* 15.)

Behold the zealous, enthusiastic Peter, Prince of the Apostles. We cannot follow through those more than thirty years at Antioch and Rome spreading the Kingdom of his Lord; laying the foundation of the Church, which was to last throughout all time. Picture St. Peter entering Rome! He, by the grace of God, had to commence the work of overthrowing paganism, of teaching the world to accept the faith of Jesus Christ, of founding a kingdom there that would outlive the greatest empires and monarchies, whose rule, from Peter's tomb, would hold sway wherever the sun shines down upon God's creation.

Does not the memory of these things, called to life this day, lift up our souls to God ? Blessed Peter was all this, and his work is living still because he had Faith. And Faith is the gift of that dear Saviour, Who died for us as well as for Peter. And in God's mercy, for our sakes, He let Peter fall, and Paul be a persecutor, before He raised them to be Apostles, to encourage us poor sinners, so frail, so tempted, so inconstant.

Pray to the Holy Apostles, then, earnestly for a living, energetic faith, for a little of the courage and perseverance, with which they served their Divine Master. In heaven they are not unmindful of us ; they are interested in the Church and the children of the Church as they were on earth. And who shall say their intercession now is not as powerful as their word, their touch, or even their shadow was on earth ? and if the sick, and the cripples, and the blind, and the lame rose up, glorifying God for the power He gave to men, shall we not experience their help if we only beseech it ? We ask faith to cling to our Blessed Lord ; obedience, readily to do His Will ; courage, to draw back from and hesitate at nothing ; love, to make all things easy and sweet.

Blessed thought it is to know that the great Apostles can be interested in us, that they receive glory in heaven from our prayers and endeavours to imitate their example. May they plead for us to that good God, Who raised them and transformed them into Apostles by His Grace.

Festival of the Most Precious Blood

"Christ, by His own Blood, having obtained eternal Redemption."—Heb. ix. 12.

1. What the Precious Blood has done for us. Redemption, grace.
2. If so, what more? It must be applied to our souls by sacraments, especially by Penance and Holy Eucharist.
3. The memory of the Precious Blood, a motive for zeal.
4. We sin because we forget it. The ingratitude of forgetfulness.

The memory of the Precious Blood, my dear brethren, should be treasured in our hearts, an impulse and a motive to be loving and earnest in God's service. "Christ, by His own Blood, having obtained eternal Redemption." For what has that Precious Blood done for us? Everything.

We were redeemed from sin and hell by it. We were enriched with grace through it. Our title-deeds to Heaven were written in it.

If so, what more is needed? This is the cry of certain sects who say, once saved, always saved. This is the excuse that careless Catholics try to believe in, to quieten their consciences, for living in sin and out of the Church. "We have been redeemed," they say. "Christ has saved us, He shed His Blood for the remission of sins."

Quite true, as far as it goes. But it is not the whole truth. You have been redeemed, but you have sinned

again. So you have lost the effects of the Redemption, unless it is applied to your souls again by the Sacraments of the Church. There is plenty of food in the houses of the rich, but it does not nourish the poor and the hungry that pass by the door. There is medicine for all diseases in the chemist's shop, but it does not cure the sick who is looking through the window. Food has to be eaten and medicine taken by each one to do them good.

And the Precious Blood of Jesus Christ, the Treasure of the Church, exists for us, and in the mercy of God it can be applied to each soul by the Sacraments of the Church to redeem us. Baptism, through the merits of the Precious Blood, can wash away sin, but the sin is not washed away till the water is poured and the words are pronounced. The Sacrament of Penance forgives sins, but only the sins of those who repent and confess. As well say that the bad thief, who reviled our Lord on the cross, that the scoffers, who derided Him in His agony, received the benefits of the Precious Blood, as well as Magdalene, who knelt by the cross in sorrow and in tears.

So it is not enough that Christ died once and shed His Blood for mankind. Each one must have the merits of that applied to his soul, and the application renewed, as often as he falls into sin. How privileged are we ! The very Angels must envy us, for whenever we wish, that Precious Blood can be applied to our souls. Why is that beautiful sight so common in our Churches—the patient throng around the confessional ? They are the faithful ones, returning week after week, or month after month, asking for the Precious Blood to cleanse their souls again from all sin,

to enrich them and strengthen them with God's grace, that they may persevere. Why is it, again, that troops of young and old are hurrying through the streets on a Sunday morning? To be in time for Holy Mass, that blessed Sacrifice, the daily renewal of Calvary. Shall they, who stay away, be blessed as those, who gather round the altar? If, through his own fault, one sins grievously by missing Mass, shall not the other be blessed indeed for coming to it? It is the same sacrifice as that of Calvary, the same Victim offered up, "Christ, by His own Blood, having obtained eternal Redemption." And He is offered up for the same ends and reasons. To give honour and glory to God, to offer thanks in gratitude for all His blessings, for that Precious Blood present on the altar, and to ask Him that it may wash our sins away once more, and purchase for us all the graces we need. No reason to be afraid of asking too much; we have the price given us to pay well for them all, the Precious Blood of Christ.

And blessed those who, not content with attending Mass, reverently approach and receive the Body and Blood of their Redeemer. Clad, then, are their souls in the merits of the Precious Blood. Keep those robes of innocence spotless from Communion to Communion. But if those robes are soiled by venial sin, or draggled in the mire of mortal sin, do not stay away, do not despond, return and wash them again and again in the Blood of the Lamb. Our Blessed Saviour is never weary of forgiving the repentant sinner.

Nothing, that we can do, gives such honour and pleasure to our Blessed Lord as the reverent, loving use of His Precious Blood in the Sacraments of Penance and the Holy Eucharist. The more we cherish the

memory of the Precious Blood, the impulse and the motive will be all the stronger—to repent of our sins regularly and frequently, to love the Holy Mass, so that nothing, but sheer necessity, shall ever keep us from it, to look forward to our Communion days with tender and true love. How easily all blessings can be ours, if we keep that memory glowing in our hearts.

And in the past, how can our sinfulness and negligence be accounted for, except that instead of a memory there was utter forgetfulness of the Precious Blood of Christ? We might say, forgetfulness "hath trodden under foot the Son of God." (Heb. x. 29.) In our folly, in the blindness of our passion, we never remembered the Precious Blood and its claims upon us. What slight, what insult can be as cruel as this utter forgetfulness? "Oh, annihilate not the mercies of God by the forgetfulness of ingratitude."

O Lord, imprint the memory of Thy Redemption on our hearts, that we may never forget Thee. And this is our hope, that He can never forget us, Who redeemed us with His Blood. He cannot, and He would have us know that and believe it. For that reason the glorified Body of our Lord in heaven bears the marks of His five sacred Wounds. He has written us in His Hands, He opened a way to His Heart for forgiveness. Cherish, then, the memory of that saving Blood, shed for us on the cross. We shall make our salvation all the more secure, the more frequently we remember and turn to that good Lord, Who by His own Blood obtained for us eternal Redemption.

The Assumption

"He that is mighty hath done great things to me."—Luke i. 49.

1. The day of Mary's triumph.
2. But our Lady had various triumphs leading to this one of glory: triumph of faith, of love and mercy, of endurance and patience.
3. And all for our encouragement and help.

It is a common taunt to us Catholics, my dear brethren, that we make too much of the Blessed Virgin Mary. In doing our very utmost to honour her, we are only very faintly imitating Almighty God Himself. "He that is mighty hath done great things to me," are our Blessed Lady's own words. And to-day the supreme triumph of Mary, let us recall the great things that the Lord hath done for her.

Mary had various triumphs—triumphs of faith, of love and mercy, endurance and mercy, and of glory. And in God's Providence they led up one to the other, one a preparation for the next, to the culmination—the glorious Assumption into heaven.

Her first triumph was at Bethlehem on Christmas night. She had believed the word of the Lord, the word Gabriel had brought to her at Nazareth: "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. . . . Thou shalt bring forth a Son, and thou shalt call His Name Jesus. He shall be great and be called the Son of the Most

High. . . . And of His Kingdom there shall be no end." (Luke i. 28-33.) Now, this word had come to pass. Faith had triumphed, the Saviour of the world was born. Mary's heart that night was making melody with the Angels of God on High. *Gloria in excelsis Deo!*

Her second triumph was of faith, too, and a prolonged one. Her glory was that the Divinity of her Son was made evident in His public Life. The crowds thronged to hear Him, and He spoke as One having power. They followed Him, fascinated, forgetful of rest or food. They brought to Him all that were sick and diseased, and He healed them all. Even the devils, cast out of them that were possessed, proclaimed Him Christ, the Son of God. And poor sinners came to Him, and her Son had said: "Thy sins are forgiven thee." And as His enemies objected, "Who can forgive sins but God alone?" He openly claimed to be the Son of God, and that the Father and Himself were one. "Though you will not believe Me, believe the works." (John x. 38.) "Believe for the very works' sake." (John xiv. 12.) The very dead raised to life, Lazarus given back to his sisters, proved Him the Resurrection and the Life.

Mary kept all these words in her heart. And this triumph of hers, a prolonged one of three years, but kept in the holy solitude of her heart, was to strengthen her for the next triumph—the triumph over a mother's heart, the triumph of love and mercy for sinners.

Calvary is the next scene of Mary's triumph. She consented to her Son's Death, she offered Him up a Sacrifice for sin, through pity for us poor sinners. We reverence the Martyrs, braving the rack and the sword, scourgings and fire for their Lord's sake; but Mary is

the Queen of Martyrs! As the soul transcends the body, so the sword-thrust, that pierced her soul, was more agonizing than any bodily suffering. The shadow of the cross had been hovering over her since the Child was born. At last the hour had come, foreseen for three-and-thirty years. And Mary nerved herself, for the Glory of God and the salvation of our souls, to stand by the cross, to witness that Atonement, to take her part in it, giving up her Divine Son, and taking us for her children in His place.

It is over. And as our Blessed Lady had partaken of the Sufferings of the cross, justly did she participate in the triumph of the Redeemer in His Resurrection and Ascension. The gospel is silent. No mention of Mary, the Immaculate, at Easter. That was our Lady's humility. But we may reverently congratulate her on the joy of Easter Day. To behold her Son, risen, glorious, and immortal, what a triumph! That one moment of ecstatic joy more than compensated the Mother of Sorrow, for all that she had gone through.

All too quickly the forty days passed on, and from Mount Olivet Jesus ascended into heaven. Would it not have been a beautiful ending, if Mary had been taken up to heaven with her Son?

There was another triumph she had to pass through first—the triumph of patience. The infant Church needed a Mother. It needed her to tell them all those words, she had kept in her heart. The Evangelists needed her for the Gospel records. Her example, influence, guidance, presence was needed, and she gave twelve long years without a murmur.

What endurance and patience, for what a bleak, dreary world to her it must have been, and Jesus gone! In memory of those years, let us school ourselves to

submit to the Holy Will of God, to embrace all the monotony, weariness, and sufferings of life to imitate our Blessed Lady.

She thus prepared herself for the final triumph, and so can we. "Patience hath a perfect work." (Jas. i. 4.) And now comes the crowning glory of all. The holy, peaceful slumber of death, the Assumption into heaven, and the Crowning of our Blessed Lady, Mother of God. The contrast! What Mary's life had appeared to the world, and what God saw in it—immaculate, obedient, loving—but words fail to tell of it; but the glory, that is revealed in the Assumption, tells us what that life had been.

How this day had been looked forward to in heaven! The Angels longing to see their Queen, the Virgin who had been chosen to be the Mother of God. The saints ready to do homage and bid her welcome. St. Joseph, glorifying God for the reward exceeding great prepared for her, whom he had loved and guarded with such fidelity; and our Blessed Lady herself, how she must have longed for this day to dawn, the dawn of eternal joy and glory. Our Lady realized then "He that is mighty hath done great things to me."

Remember us in all your joy and triumph. Every soul saved adds to your glory. Poor exiles as yet, we look up to heaven, and exult, and praise God for the glory of His Mother.

St. Michael and the Angels

"At that time shall Michael rise up, the great Prince, who standeth for the children of Thy people."—Dan. xii. 1.

1. Angels unthought of by the world, forgotten even by Catholics.
2. Yet they are our defenders.
3. And why? For God's honour, our salvation, and because their fallen brethren our enemies.
4. Our duty to them: (*a*) to remember their presence; (*b*) to fit ourselves to be their companions.
5. They help us in every endeavour, especially at death. Proof from Ritual.

This world so engrosses us, my dear brethren, that our soul is not anxious to look into and behold the mysteries of the spiritual world. Most men go through life, quite unaware of the presence around them of the Angels of God.

And to our shame and confusion, we Catholics, who know that we have an Angel Guardian always with us; who know that we are protected by Michael, Gabriel, Raphael, and the rest; who know that our prayers are borne up before the throne of mercy by the hands of Angels; who know that we are meant to be the companions of Angels for all eternity; we Catholics ourselves, how little do we think of them? how seldom do we pray to them? How is it that they have so little influence over our lives? Out of sight, out of mind. We do not see them, therefore they are forgotten. We

are so taken up by this world, that the other has no hold upon our minds and hearts.

Yet by the mercy of God these glorious and blessed spirits have been enlisted in the service of us poor sinners, to be our defenders and our guardians.

Let us see why it is that they have willingly and lovingly undertaken these duties ? To the honour and glory of God, to defend us from the attacks of the devil; and so, by helping to save us, to fill the ranks in heaven, depleted by the casting out of their fallen brethren.

It was God's supremacy that was attacked by the rebellion of Lucifer. "And there was a great battle in heaven, Michael and his Angels fought with the dragon, and the dragon fought and his angels ; and they prevailed not, neither was their place found any more in heaven. And that great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, who seduceth the whole world." (Apoc. xii. 7-9.)

And Blessed Michael's warfare was not over even then, for when Satan saw that he was cast out for ever, he was very angry, and made war against the children of God, "who keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ." (Apoc. xii. 17.) Therefore, the Angels come to our assistance, for it is their fallen brethren who are our enemies. They say to us, as to Daniel, the prophet : "Fear not. . . . Take courage, and be strong." And we can answer as he did : "None is my helper in all these things, but Michael your prince." (Dan. x. 19, 21.) And defending us from the attacks of Satan, they help to secure for us, if we are loyal and co-operate with them, the vacant thrones in heaven.

What, then, is our duty with regard to the Angels ? First, we must learn to remember their presence and

reverence it. What different lives we should lead, if we walked in the presence of our Angel! The seductions of this world, its charms and its pleasures, would fall powerless from around us. When temptations came, to look from them to the Angel, the contrast would be so great that we should repel them, and turn from them with loathing.

And our prayers would be prayers indeed. "And the smoke of the incense of the prayers of the Saints ascended up before God from the hand of the Angel." (Apoc. viii. 4.) And the crosses, that we all must bear, would be taken up cheerfully and carried bravely, for the Angel would be there to encourage us, and record the good deed done. And this remembering their presence can be learned if we try. Pray for it daily, and their memory will grow in our hearts. Ask the help of St. Frances of Rome, who for so many years enjoyed the privilege of the visible, daily companionship of her Angel.

Secondly, knowing that we are destined to be with Angels for all eternity, we must endeavour to make ourselves fit to be their companions. What a mockery it sounds to many of us! We, the companions of Angels? We, with our sins, our selfishness, and imperfections? We, who are tied down to this world with so many low and shameful tendencies and entanglements? Brethren, we must fit ourselves to be their companions, for there is no choice. Either we must be worthy to join Michael and his Angels, blessing and praising God, or we must pass an endless eternity with the devil and the fallen angels.

With God's grace and the help of the Angels we can, and we must resolve to make ourselves fit to be their companions. In each endeavour, there are Angels to

help us. If we repent of our sins, which is the first thing to do, they help us. "There shall be joy before the Angels of God upon one sinner doing penance." (Luke xv. 10.) If we enter the Church, the Angel of the Church will take charge of our poor prayers. If we assist at Mass, the Angels are round about the Altar. If we receive Holy Communion, the Angels will fall down and adore, and praise, and thank, and implore our Blessed Saviour for us. It will be a new object in our lives to try to make ourselves like the Angels of God. If we are not zealous and earnest in this work, where is the faith and hope and thankful love of God in our souls? If we try, Michael will rise up and stand by us to assist us.

My dear brethren, if we are loyal to the Angels, remembering their presence, trying to be less unworthy of their company, the hour will come when they will prove their loyalty to us. When we come to die, the Angels will be our friends in very truth. The devil will be on the alert, so will the Angels. The prayers for Extreme Unction ask: "May the Angels of peace be present"; and, again: "We pray and beseech our Lord Jesus Christ . . . that He may give them a good Angel for a guardian . . . that He may ward off all hostile powers, and rescue them from all fear." And again the prayer says: "Vouchsafe to send thy Angel from heaven to guard, protect, and defend." Is not that Blessed Michael the Angel of the death-bed? How anxious they all will be, especially our faithful Guardian, to rescue us from the enemy, to save us unto themselves, to bear our souls, as a trophy of a fresh victory, before the throne of God.

And the burial service, which will be read over each one of us, let us remember that speaks emphatically

again of the ministrations of Angels. "Come to his assistance, ye Saints of God, meet him, ye Angels of the Lord, receiving his soul, offering it in the sight of the most High. May Christ receive thee, Who has called thee, and may the Angels conduct thee into Abraham's bosom." And again: "May the Angels lead thee into paradise . . . may the choir of Angels receive thee." And over our very grave there is a blessing, and God is asked to "depute His holy Angel to guard it."

There is still one other time when glorious St. Michael "will rise up and stand for us." When our purgatory is finished, when at last every stain shall have been washed away, and we are fit—oh, blessed thought—to see God, Michael, the Archangel, will summon us to heaven. The offertory for the Mass for the Dead says: "May the holy standard-bearer Michael introduce them to the holy light."

Having taught ourselves to remember the Angels in life, having tried to make ourselves less unworthy to be their companions, at last the glorious never-ending day of a happy eternity will dawn upon us. The Angels will receive us as one of themselves, then no more to part. With them we shall stand before the face of God, beholding Him and glorifying Him for ever.

Rosary Sunday

"And all the multitude of the people was praying."—LUKE i. 10.

1. Special blessing on the Rosary, the prayer of the multitude, the prayer of obedience.
2. Perfect prayer: our minds, the mysteries; our lips, the "Our Father," "Hail, Mary!"
3. A bad sign not to love the Rosary.
4. A worse sign to be ashamed of it.
5. The world, godless, self-sufficient, cold-hearted, needed a remedy. The remedy is the Rosary.

THERE is a special blessing, my dear brethren, on the recitation of the holy Rosary. A twofold blessing, for it is the prayer of the multitude and the prayer of obedience. When we are gathered together in prayer, we know that the Lord is in the midst of us. If the Almighty would have spared Sodom for the sake of fifty, thirty, or even ten good men, we can understand what a help and a safeguard it is to us, to be joined to all the devout Catholics throughout the world in saying the Rosary. Our poor prayers are borne up to the throne of mercy with the mighty voice of the multitude.

And, again, it is the prayer of obedience. The Rosary is ordered by the Vicar of Christ. As Catholics we know that obedience sets the seal of God's good pleasure on every good work. And in saying our beads, let us not forget to make that intention; we say

them to be obedient. What a revelation this obedience is to this proud self-sufficient world to see millions of Catholics saying the Rosary, in every language spoken on God's earth, at the command of their spiritual Father, the Pope! What voice could be heard and obeyed, throughout the whole world, other than that of Blessed Peter's successor? The special blessing of obedience must, then, fall upon those who, at that word, join in the devotion of the holy Rosary.

The Rosary is a perfect prayer. The mysteries keep before our minds the sacred events, the life, death, and doctrines of our Lord, and the prayers that we say are the prayers dearest to the heart of every child of God. The "Our Father," that sublime, yet short and simple, prayer, taught us by our Blessed Lord Himself. In it we are raised up to pray for God's glory: "Hallowed be Thy name"; our end, "Thy Kingdom come"; for the spiritual means, "Thy Will be done"; and for the temporal means to aid us, "Give us our daily bread and deliver us from evil." And then ten times over the "Hail, Mary!" The glorious announcement of the Incarnation, the Holy Name, the petition to the Mother of God for poor sinners and a holy death. And the "Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost," keeping the Blessed Trinity before our minds, and showing us that the end of all is the honour and glory of God.

And who, that knows the Mysteries, the Joyful, Sorrowful, and Glorious, and ponders over them and learns to love them, can go wrong in his faith?

The five Joyful tell us first of the Incarnation. The declaration of the Angel, "Hail, full of grace!" Mary was to be the Mother of the Redeemer, the Virgin Mother of God. The second Mystery shows us Mary

in her humility and kindness. What a consolation to us all. Elizabeth might have found other neighbours, but Mary went. We are in far sorer need than Elizabeth, so we may well trust in our Lady's help. The Birth of our Lord is the third Joyful Mystery. Meditating on this, how many a poor sinner's heart has given itself to God, won over by that Infant's cry from the manger, touched by that, as nothing else could have done. The Presentation in the Temple reveals the exact obedience to the Law of Mary and Joseph, and shows us the spirit we must have towards the Church. And the last, the finding of the Child Jesus in the Temple, tells us of our Lord, even as a child, being about His Father's business, our salvation.

The Sorrowful Mysteries teach us compunction of heart in the easiest and surest way by contemplating the Sufferings of our Lord. The Agony at the sight of our sins, the cruel Scourging, the Crowning with thorns, the painful Carrying of the Cross, and the Crucifixion and Death of Our Redeemer. Remembrance of the love, that prompted our Lord to endure such sufferings, must awaken love in our hearts in response, and a sorrow that our sins caused that Passion and Death.

The Glorious Mysteries sound a note of triumph, and help us well to persevere. The Resurrection proved that Christ was God, and that we were redeemed. The Ascension bids us hope for that Home that He has won for us. In the Descent of the Holy Ghost, we see the fulfilment of Christ's promise, the infusion of faith, the birth of the Church. And the final mysteries are the Assumption and the Crowning of our Blessed Lady and glory of all the Saints. Persevere in this

devotion of the Rosary, and we, too, one day shall celebrate these Mysteries in blessed reality.

My brethren, if in our hearts we have to own that there is but little liking or devotion to the Rosary, let us be very humbled and afraid. There is something wrong with us. Prayer is the food of the soul. If we have no appetite, if food yields us no nourishment, we know there is a disease, an ailment somewhere. So with our souls. Be ashamed and afraid, and pray to God to give you a healthy soul.

And some there are, who are ashamed to be seen using their beads. They imagine that they are only meant for poor, ignorant people, for those who cannot read. It is the devout servants of Mary that should be ashamed of you, and not for you to be afraid to be mistaken for them.

It is with reason that this prayer of the multitude was ordered by the infallible voice of Rome. The Pope gauged well the spirit of the age ; he knew well the langour and weakness of the faith of so many ; he knew how Christian vigour was being sapped by godlessness, and the ridicule and sneers of the wicked. And God inspired him to prescribe the remedy. The tonic, to reinvigorate decaying piety, is the Holy Rosary.

Take the beads in your hands, as obedient children of the Church, say them daily, say them publicly, help to make it the prayer of the multitude, and you will find that the Rosary will give fresh life to half-hearted Catholics, and win back those not living up to their religion. The Rosary will inspire the self-opinionated with respect for the wisdom of the Church. Men who think the Church old-fashioned and out of date, and have a supercilious and patronizing way in listening to priest or bishop, will be won by the Rosary to know

that they have simply to be children of the Church, obedient and devout in prayer.

The Rosary will give fresh zeal and sustained energy to good people, to confraternities, children of Mary, young men's societies, will put new life in public devotions and Benedictions, as if we all had only one great, throbbing, loving heart with which to praise and bless God through Mary.

And the Holy Rosary will obtain for all, who are faithful to it, perseverance and a holy death. A mother is not one to forget her children. And could Mary have a Mother's heart and not be touched with this prayer of the multitude invoking her aid? Every "Hail, Mary!" of all the countless Rosaries that have ever been said, has ended, "Pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death!" And Mary, our Mother, will not forget.

All Saints

"I believe in the communion of Saints."—Apostles' Creed.

1. The Saints and we are one, men and women like us; the same end.

2. Twofold duty: to congratulate the Saints, to encourage ourselves; for we have the same means of holiness, only the same obstacles; and many helps we have not used.

3. In all these things like the Saints; in one so different—the Will.

It is Heaven to which we turn our eyes to-day, and as we gaze upon that glorious multitude, joyful and blessed in the presence of their God, we turn and look round upon ourselves, and say: "They were once on earth, men and women like ourselves."

Yes, like ourselves. The same Creator, the same Father, the same Redeemer died for us as died for them, the same Sacred Heart that loves us throbbed for them; the same means, motives, end—to be happy for ever in heaven. The end, which they now enjoy, the end, we humbly hope one day to gain—oh! are we tending there with humble, earnest wills?

Who are we, sinful and negligent, to dare approach to congratulate the glorious Saints upon their triumph and glory? But we can, in the name of Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours. In His Name we can thank them for having been His faithful servants, for having loved Him so generously and so well, for having lived

and died for Him. Imitation is the truest mark of honour and respect, and to imitate them, with God's help and their intercession, we humbly hope to try.

And this leads us to the second duty—to encourage ourselves to this following the footsteps of the Saints. Their example helps us on! We are like pilgrims in the desert, like the Israelites of old. And though we know that God has gathered us together and pointed out the track, yet the way is so long, years we have been in the wilderness, with the monotonous sands all around us, thirst for worldly pleasures tormenting us, selfishness and uncharitableness dividing us. Thus we band of sinners on our march are fainting and falling and dying!

When lo, the bright vision of the Saints—Beacons of Hope! They have journeyed the selfsame way, and there they stand, beckoning us on, encouraging us. At their voice stragglers are recalled, the outworn inspirited, panic, despair flee away. The example of the Saints makes us brave to persevere in our pilgrimage on to the Promised Land!

For look, my brethren, what encouragements are ours. The very same means, with which the Saints worked out their salvation, are freely offered to us. Graces abundant—prayer, the Holy Sacraments, the Blessed Sacrifice of the Mass.

Oh, you will answer, look at the obstacles! Yes, there are obstacles, but not greater than those that the Saints have overcome. And yet they did overcome them nobly and generously, and are crowned with glory for it now. The Saints have had temptations and trials. They know what it is to fight against unruly passions, and some of them even bad habits. They know what selfishness and jealousy, faint-

heartedness and weariness in well-doing are. They remember their long hours of perhaps dry and distracted prayer, when God was trying them. But they never gave up the struggle, never made peace with sin. They sought refuge with Jesus, and finding Him found all things. We, too, must put all our trust in our Blessed Lord, and learn to be loyal, obedient, and faithful to Him.

And this day tells of other helps we have towards heaven. Remember, in every Saint, we shall find a friend. On earth, had they no charity, did they not pray for each other, and many of them spent their lives in trying to save souls? And think you that their love has grown cold, and their sympathy dried up, now they are in heaven? No, they are now more like their Divine Master than ever, and we know that He ascended into Heaven to plead for us, to show His Wounds for us, to prepare for us a Home. Heaven is not the land of forgetfulness. The Saints look down upon us now, interested in us, sympathizing with us, praying for us. All this we believe when we say: "I believe in the Communion of Saints."

In all these things—our end, the means, the obstacles—so like the Saints, in one thing so different. One thing which, alas, spoils all! The will. All depends upon the will. Our will is free, is strong, persevering when it wants, so it is all our own fault if we are not Saints. In all things so like the Saints, save the good will. We have not the will, the determination to master the obstacles, the will to turn every opportunity to advantage, the will to treasure the call to heaven; we have not the will, the courage to despise, to break with the world, and to venture everything to be a Saint.

The All Saints' Day will come, when each and all of us have gone, and we shall remember in joy or in pain, how we made up our minds to imitate the Saints or neglected. We shall see then how much depended, how eternity depended, on the spending the present time well. Oh, if we had only had the will to be determined, and try to be a Saint! We had the means, the chances, but not the will. We shirked confession, made excuses from Communion, were neglectful during Mass, hurried over our prayers. We never once came with tearful, downcast eyes and sorrowing heart, and falling down at our Lord's feet, besought Him, saying: "O Lord, give me a good will, a will to try my best!"

Let that be your prayer this day, and how many a Saint, recalling his own conversion to God, will aid you by his prayers. Take heart of courage, they will help you.

Let us this day make a fresh start to become Saints. Our soul is just as precious as theirs; we are meant for heaven as much as they were. If we have obstacles, so had they. And we have the same holy means, the same gracious helps, the same indulgent Heavenly Father. May God bless us with the same fervent will, and then some day—blessed thought!—"All Saints" will be our festival too.

All Souls

"Love, therefore, is the fulfilling of the law."—Rom. xiii. 10.

1. The loving things of Religion.
2. Purgatory, its cause, sufferings.
3. We can help those souls, and how?
4. By helping them, we sanctify ourselves, sin less, and secure help for our own death.
5. By being devout to the Holy Souls we even glorify the Saints, and please God.

God is love. And Religion, too, is love, for the soul and essence of it is love. And yet, my dear brethren, we find all the beliefs and practices in religion, that speak most of love, were swept away in this land of ours three hundred years ago. And the old religion, our own, thank God, is the only one that cherishes them now. Such things as forgiveness of sins, the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, devotion to our Blessed Lady, the Saints, belief in the doctrine of Purgatory, and love for the Holy Souls.

"All Saints, all Souls," speak to each one's heart. The festival, one day, we trust, will be the festival of us all. And on the following day, "All Souls," a plaintive voice falls on our ear. Whose voice is it? The voice of lamentation over venial sins and the debt of temporal punishment due to sin, which, though forgiven, has not been sufficiently atoned for. And it is a plaintive and sorrowful voice, because those souls have seen Jesus Christ, they know and regret what they are deprived of—the Blessed Vision of God—and for

what? For paltry, contemptible sins they have lost it.

"Love, therefore, is the fulfilling of the law." Yes, my dear brethren, we can prove our love for the Holy Souls by helping them. One deed of love cancels their sins and draws down God's blessing on ourselves. Though they are saved, yet for a time they have to suffer and be purified, till the last farthing of the debt be paid. And, alas! they are helpless themselves to mitigate or shorten the weary time of punishment. Their time for meriting is over. Ours as yet is not. We can help them by our prayers, good works, attending or having the Holy Mass offered for them, by receiving Holy Communion and gaining Indulgences for them.

All this is scoffed at by those who do not understand. They think all kindness and love and charitable aid is monopolized by the world. But no, religion is love. And if they through love can pay fines and stand bail for their friends in the court of law, cannot we present our offerings before the throne of God for the poor souls He has imprisoned till the last farthing be paid? They have not the means; we have, in prayer and the Sacrifice and the Indulgences of the Church.

And it is a natural love, elevated and purified by God's grace, that leads us to do this. It is only the continuation of that love, which bids us sit up, night after night, nursing the sick and the dying, that love which makes the death of dear ones such a pain and a void in our hearts.

Yes, we can help the souls in Purgatory, and by helping them we sanctify ourselves. For, first, we shall sin less and repent oftener, if we are devout to the Holy Souls. "In all thy works remember thy last end, and thou shalt never sin." (Ecclus. vii. 40.)

Praying regularly for them and at the same time plunging recklessly into sin! No, we should give up the one or the other. And if we did fall, remembrance of them would urge us the sooner to repent.

And devotion and earnestness are the rewards of those, who pray for the Holy Souls. Fervour will animate your prayer, and such prayer is indeed the key of heaven for their souls and for our own.

Each of us has to die. And by this devotion we do away with the terror of death. The loneliness of death, which affrights so many when they come to die, will have no terrors for those, who have constantly been devout to the souls in Purgatory. For every soul we have helped will then, in our need, be a friend indeed, and a chorus of supplication will then implore mercy for us from the good Saviour, so soon to be our Judge.

"Love, therefore, is the fulfilling of the law." Whose cause, then, am I pleading when I ask you to manifest this love by prayers and works of mercy? The cause of the souls dependent on our kindness. Helpless themselves, but longing and expectant of a remembrance from us. They are brethren. Redeemed by the same Saviour, fortified by the same Sacraments, fallen through the same weaknesses and temptations that we know so well. They have struggled manfully, yea, have won the battle though wounded. They are in hospital now, suffering. Thinking of it in this way, how gladly you would volunteer to nurse and tend them. But out of sight, so often out of mind. And amongst those holy souls there must be some we know so well—parents, brethren, companions. Do not forget, for that is cruel ingratitude. Love is the fulfilling, and love is remembrance.

Whose cause am I pleading? Your own, my dear

brethren. When your body is lying in its lonely grave, and your soul agonizing in Purgatory, will not the just God measure mercy out to you as you have measured it to others? (Matt. vii. 2.) So for your own soul's sake be devout and generous, or you will be forgotten as you forgot them.

I am pleading the cause of the Saints in heaven, when I ask you to remember the Holy Souls. The Saints want fresh voices to swell their chorus of praise; they need more Holy Ones to fill the still vacant thrones in heaven. If, then, there is joy in heaven over one poor sinner doing penance, what exultation there must be, when St. Michael leads in another soul to be with them for evermore.

Finally, I am pleading the cause of Jesus Christ our Lord, Who died for these souls. Venial sin and the penalties of sin rob Him of His glory. Justice holds back the hand of mercy. We poor sinners, however, by God's grace, can step in and make satisfaction for them, and by freeing them, give honour to God, and make even the Almighty a debtor to us. What an honour to be able to do a favour to the good God!

If we only remembered these things how devout we should be. Love would lead us to do our utmost for them. And realize how this devotion is blessed. The same prayer, or Mass, or deed of mercy helps them, lays by a reward for ourselves, delights the Saints and our Blessed Lady, and gives honour and glory to God Himself in Heaven.

THE END

R. & T. Washbourne, Ltd., 4 Paternoster Row, London.

CATHOLIC THEOLOGICAL UNION
BX1756.H52 C001 V001
SHORT SERMONS NEW YORK

3 0311 00043 7587

WITHDRAWN

55365
BX
1756
.H52 Hickey, Francis P.
AUTHOR
v.1 SHORT SERMONS.
6767

WHEN taking out this book, please write name and date on card and place card in CARD-DROP.

PLEASE see that this book is returned ON TIME: others may be waiting for it.

KINDLY refrain from defacing this book in any way, and also from leaving MARKERS of any kind between the pages.

3 0511 00043 7567